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THE ROMANCES OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Handy Library Edition

The D'Artagnan Romances

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

VOLUME ONE

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THREE MUS

Alexandre Dumas.

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THE ROMANCES OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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THE THREE MUSKETEERS

VOLUME ONE

BOSTON
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

No other one of all the works of the elder Dumas, with the possible exception of "Monte Cristo," is so widely known and read, and so universally popular among English-speaking people, as that which relates the thrilling adventures of the "Three Musketeers" and their friend and brother, the clever Gascon, D'Artagnan, who has held, for many years, an undisputed place in the very front rank of heroes of romance. In many countries and languages, and upon the stage, the bravery and wit of the four inseparables have enthralled and fascinated more than one generation; and countless readers yet to come will find enjoyment in the most striking exemplification of the marvellous story-telling powers of the great writer, of whom a favorite essayist of our own day has said: "The past and present are photographed imperishably on his brain; he knows the manners of all ages and all countries, the names of all the arms that men have used, all the garments they have worn, all the dishes they have tasted, all the terms of all professions from swordsmanship to coach-building."

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Those readers who find a never-failing source of enjoyment in what Macaulay might have called the *audacia Gasconica* of D'Artagnan, and in the simple-hearted, good-humored, unquestioning loyalty of Porthos, the Titan; who never tire of travelling with the famous four from Paris to London to save the honor of Anne of Austria; who follow with bated breath the gradual perversion and corruption by Milady of the Puritan Felton, and shudder at the vengeance wreaked upon her by those to whom her hideous crimes have brought unhappiness and suffering, — all such may take comfort in the assurance that every painful or pleasurable emotion they feel has been felt and acknowledged by those whose judgment in matters literary we love to respect. The list is a long one of eminent writers who have borne testimony to the enjoyment they have taken in the doughty deeds of the heroes of these volumes.

"Think of a whole day in bed and a good novel for a companion!" says Thackeray, in his "Roundabout Papers." "The Chevalier d'Artagnan to tell me stories from dawn to night! . . . Suppose Athos, Porthos, and Aramis should enter with a noiseless swagger, curling their mustaches. . . . Of your heroic heroes, I think Monseigneur Athos, Count de la Fère, is my favorite. I have read about him from sunrise to sunset with the utmost contentment of mind. He has passed through how

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many volumes? Forty? Fifty? I wish, for my part, there were a hundred more, and would never tire of him rescuing prisoners, punishing ruffians, and running scoundrels through the midriff with his most graceful rapier. Ah, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, you are a magnificent trio!"

Robert Louis Stevenson and Hayward, the clever essayist, have put themselves, unhesitatingly, on record as ardent admirers of Dumas and his chivalrous heroes; and Andrew Lang surrenders to the charm quite as completely, and in his most graceful manner, in one of his "Letters to Dead Authors."

"You gave us," he writes, "the valor of D'Artagnan, the strength of Porthos, the melancholy nobility of Athos: Honor, Chivalry, and Friendship. I declare your characters are real people to me, and old friends. . . . The reproach of being amusing has somewhat dimmed your fame for a moment. The shadow of this tyranny will soon be overpast, and men and women — and above all, boys — will laugh and weep over the page of Alexandre Dumas. Like Scott himself, you take us captive in our childhood. I remember a very idle little boy who was busy with the 'Three Musketeers' when he should have been occupied with 'Wilkins's Latin Prose.' 'Twenty years after' (alas! and more) he is still constant to that gallant company, and at this very moment is breathlessly

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wondering whether Grimaud will steal M. de Beaufort out of the Cardinal's prison."

It may be said of this and of the other volumes of the group in which D'Artagnan is a principal figure, as indeed it may be said of all the historical tales of this incomparable writer, that the interest is greatly intensified by the knowledge that in all the main features, as well as in many details, the narrative deals with well-vouched historical facts, and with personages who have actually existed, and whose portraits are generally drawn with great faithfulness.

The leading motive of this tale, Cardinal Richelieu's bitter enmity to Anne of Austria and to her bosom-friend and confidante, Madame de Chevreuse, is a well-authenticated fact. The same is true of the king's lack of affection for his wife, which originated in her apparent partiality for his brother Gaston, who was at first known as Duc d'Anjou, afterwards as Duc d'Orléans, and was the father of "La Grande Mademoiselle." The disappointment of Louis XIII. at the queen's long-continued sterility contributed to alienate his affection from her; but the powerful influence of the king's master, the omnipotent cardinal, was the principal factor in keeping the husband and wife apart.

Richelieu's hatred for the young queen dated from an early period after her arrival in France, — when the queen mother, Marie de Médicis, although

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somewhat discredited, was still a power to be reckoned with, and in the event of the king's death without issue, would again become regent during the minority of Gaston, a contingency equally to be dreaded by the queen and the cardinal. Louis was ill, how ill no one knew; and the cardinal determined on a bold stroke. He arrayed himself in the costume of a cavalier — he was then young and handsome — and paid a visit to Anne of Austria one evening at the hour when her ladies generally left her alone; he desired to speak with her, so he said, on affairs of State. Unattended except by her old Spanish maid, she received him graciously, and was at once informed by him that his real purpose was to speak of her own affairs.

He told her that the king was seriously ill, that his physician had told him that, although death was not imminent, he could never recover; and he thereupon forcibly impressed upon her how deplorable would be her situation if the king should die without an heir of his body.

She was painfully surprised, but replied to his representations that their fate was in God's hands, and nothing more was to be said.

"Yes," said the cardinal, smiling; "but God said to his creatures: 'Help yourself and heaven will help you.'"

Being pressed by the queen to divulge his real meaning, he finally did so, and avowed his love for

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her as a justification for the audacious proposals he dared to make. The queen "dissembled her contempt, and determined to see how far the cardinal's passion would carry him."

She demanded time for reflection, and made an appointment with him for the next night; and in the meantime, in concert with Madame de Chevreuse, concocted a scheme to make him ridiculous. When he appeared the next night, the queen said that she desired to put his affection to the proof, and therefore demanded that he should dance a saraband for her in the costume of a Spanish buffoon. To her surprise he at once consented, on condition that she should be the only spectator, and that the music should be furnished by a retainer of his own.

The following night, Madame de Chevreuse, Vauthier, and Beringhen were carefully stowed away behind a screen. The violinist appeared, followed shortly by the cardinal himself, arrayed in green velvet breeches and doublet, with silver bells at his knees and castanets in his hands.

At a gesture from the queen, "he began to perform the saraband, capering about the room and waving his arms in due form. Unluckily, the very seriousness with which the cardinal went about it was so absurd to look upon that the queen could not keep a sober face, and burst out laughing. A prolonged shriek of laughter came from behind the screen, like an echo of hers. The cardinal saw that what he

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had taken for a special favor was only a practical joke, and he left the room in a furious rage. . . . Poor fools they were to play thus with the cardinal-duke's wrath! To be sure, that wrath was still an unknown quantity. After the death of Bouteville, Montmorency, Chalais, and Cinq-Mars, they certainly would not have risked such a dangerous pleasantry.

"While they were laughing at its success the cardinal was vowing everlasting hatred to Anne of Austria and Madame de Chevreuse."

When the Duke of Buckingham, the magnificent and accomplished courtier and favorite of Charles I., came to the French court as negotiator of the projected alliance between Charles, then Prince of Wales, and the king's sister, Henrietta Maria, he fell at once a victim to the charms of the queen, and made no secret of his infatuation. The jealous hatred of the cardinal was quick to seize this means of annoying the woman who had so deeply wounded his self-esteem. His emissaries watched every movement of the queen and the ambassador, and by his means devices of all sorts were resorted to, and traps laid to dishonor her. As the difficulties in the way of meeting the object of his affections, except by stealth, became greater, the duke's expedients to overcome them became ever more daring and foolhardy, and in all of them he found a zealous coadjutor in Madame de Chevreuse, — "lovely,

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clever, and audacious, . . . ready to enter heart and soul into any intrigue, no matter how whimsical or hare-brained."

The duke prolonged the negotiations for the marriage as long as he could, and when at last he was obliged to leave France with the new queen of England, he used all his power to obtain a permanent appointment as ambassador to Louis XIII.

"He set fire to two great kingdoms," says one chronicler, "staking the future of England, whose ruin he nearly compassed, and his own life, which he finally lost, against the chance of remaining in France as ambassador, in order to be near Anne of Austria, in spite of the inflexible determination of Richelieu."

The episode of the diamond studs, in which D'Artagnan's passion for Madame Bonacieux leads to our heroes' playing so prominent a part, actually occurred, substantially as here related: the queen bestowed the jewels upon the infatuated duke; the snare was laid by the cardinal, and Buckingham gave a most convincing proof of his devotion when he put an embargo upon all the ports of England while his own jeweller was making fac-similes to replace two of the pendants which had been cut off by "Milady Clarik."

It is equally true that the murderous deed of the fanatic Felton occurred at a moment most opportunely chosen to serve the ends of Louis XIII.,

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— that is to say, of Richelieu. The joy of both at the death of the duke was exuberant and openly expressed; and Anne of Austria believed, to her dying day, that her relentless foe inspired the deed.

A short time before the tragic death of Buckingham, Richelieu had dealt a deadly blow at the queen's credit, and had struck dismay into the hearts of all his enemies by his characteristically clever manipulation of the conspiracy of Chalais, in which Gaston d'Orléans and the two illegitimate sons of Henri IV. by Gabriel d'Estrées were involved. By promising clemency to Chalais, he forced from him a confession, in which he denounced the queen and Gaston as parties to a plot to assassinate king and cardinal, and to marry one another. The results of this affair were the disgrace of the queen, the unwilling marriage of Gaston to Mademoiselle de Guise, and the exile of Madame de Chevreuse, whose stolen visits to Paris and correspondence with Aramis under the name of Marie Michon form one of the brightest episodes in the "Three Musketeers."

In the succeeding volumes of this cycle, the reader will fall in again with the Gascon and his tried and true friends, and follow their fortunes through stirring and troublous times, when they had become to some extent involved in the political movements of the period; but will never find them more attractive or more diverting than in the early

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days of their defensive and offensive alliance, when they thought no more of casting defiance in the teeth of the great cardinal himself than of breakfasting in the bastion of Saint-Gervais, under the guns of Rochelle, to win a wager, — when, in short, they made for themselves the reputation for dauntless courage, invincible prowess, and chivalrous gallantry which passed into a tradition at the French court.

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LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1626–1628.

Louis XIII., King of France.
Anne of Austria, his wife.
Armand Jean Duplessis, Cardinal Richelieu, Minister of State
George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.
Patrick, his confidential servant.
M. de Tréville, Captain of the King's Musketeers.
Duc de la Trémouille, commanding the Cardinal's Guards.
D'Artagnan, a Gascon adventurer, afterwards lieutenant in the King's Musketeers.

Athos, Porthos, Aramis, } the "Three Musketeers," serving under M. de Tréville.

Comte de Rochefort, Comte de Wardes, Lady de Winter, } in the service of Richelieu.

Duchesse de Chevreuse, the friend of Anne of Austria.

M. le Comte de Soissons, Duc d'Elboeuf, Comte d'Harcourt, M. de Baradas, Duc de Longueville, Comte de la Roche-Guyon, Comte de Cramail, Chevalier de Souveray, M. de Liancourt. } of the French Court.

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M. DE SÉGUIER, keeper of the Seals.
M. DE BASSOMPIERRE, M. DE SCHOMBERG, DUC D'ANGOULÊME, M. DE TOIRAS, } French officers at the Siege of Rochelle.
LA CHESNAYE, confidential valet of Louis XIII.
DONNA ESTEFANIA, the Spanish confidant of Anne of Austria.
M. LAPORTE, the queen's servant.
MADAME DE GUITAUT, MADAME DE SABLÉ, MADAME DE MONTBAZON, MADAME DE GUÉMÉNÉE, } in attendance on Anne of Austria.
MADAME DE SURGIS, MADAME DE LANNOY, } spies of Richelieu, attending on Anne of Austria
JACQUES MICHEL BONACIEUX.
CONSTANCE, his wife, in love with D'Artagnan.
M. COQUENARD, procurator.
MADAME COQUENARD, in love with Porthos.
GRIMAUD, servant to Athos.
MOUSQUETON, Porthos's servant.
BAZIN, servant to Aramis.
PLANCHET, D'Artagnan's servant.
M. D'ESSART, brother-in-law of M. de Tréville, commanding a company of the King's Guards.
SIEUR DE LA COSTE, an ensign in the King's Guards.
M. DE MONTARAN, of the Musketeers.
M. DUHALLIER, commanding a company of guards.
M. DE BUSIGNY, of the light horse.
M. DE CAVOIS, LA HOUDINIÈRE, } captains in the Cardinal's Guards.
M. DE JUSSAC, M. DE CAHUSAC, M. DE BICARAT, M. DE BERNAJOUX, } of the Cardinal's Guards.
VITRAY, a messenger of Cardinal Richelieu.

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LUBIN, lackey of Comte de Wardes.
BRISEMONT, a soldier.
FOURREAU, a lackey.
GODEAU, Purveyor of the Musketeers.
THE EXECUTIONER OF LILLE.
THE SUPERIOR OF THE CARMELITE CONVENT AT BÉTHUNE.
THE CURATE OF MONTDIDIER.
THE PRINCIPAL OF AMIENS, superior of the Jesuits.
M. D'ARTAGNAN, the elder, } D'Artagnan's parents.
MADAME D'ARTAGNAN, }
HOST OF THE JOLLY MILLER.
HOST OF THE GOLDEN LILY.
HOST OF THE GREAT ST. MARTIN TAVERN.
HOST OF THE RED DOVECOT.
LORD DE WINTER, brother-in-law of Lady de Winter.
KITTY, Lady de Winter's maid.
JACKSON, secretary of Buckingham.
LIEUTENANT JOHN FELTON, a Puritan in the service of Lord de Winter, afterwards Buckingham's assassin.
O'REILLY, a goldsmith.
CAPTAIN BUTLER, commanding an English sloop.

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PREFACE.

In which it is proved that, notwithstanding their names in *os* and *is*, the heroes of the history which we are about to have the honor to relate to our readers have nothing mythological about them.

A SHORT time ago, while making researches in the Royal Library for my History of Louis XIV., I stumbled by chance upon the Memoirs of Monsieur d'Artagnan, printed — as were most of the works of that period, in which authors could not tell the truth without the risk of a residence, more or less long, in the Bastille — at Amsterdam, by Pierre Rouge. The title attracted me; I took them home with me, with the permission of the guardian, and devoured them.

It is not my intention here to enter into an analysis of this curious work; and I shall satisfy myself with referring such of my readers as appreciate the pictures of the period to its pages. They will therein find portraits pencilled by the hand of a master; and although these squibs may be, for the most part, traced upon the doors of barracks and the walls of cabarets, they will not find the likenesses

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of Louis XIII., Anne of Austria, Richelieu, Mazarin, and the courtiers of the period, less faithful than in the history of M. Anquetil.

But, as it is well known, that which strikes the capricious mind of the poet is not always that which affects the mass of readers. Now, while admiring, as others doubtless will admire, the curious details we have to relate, the thing which attracted our attention most strongly is one to which no one before ourselves had given a thought.

D'Artagnan relates that on his first visit to M. de Tréville, captain of the king's Musketeers, he met in the antechamber three young men, serving in the illustrious corps into which he was soliciting the honor of being received, bearing the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

We must confess these three strange names struck us; and it immediately occurred to us that they were but pseudonyms, under which D'Artagnan had disguised names perhaps illustrious, or else that the bearers of these borrowed names had themselves chosen them on the day in which, from caprice, discontent, or want of fortune, they had donned the simple musketeer's uniform.

From that moment we had no rest till we had searched all the contemporary works within our reach for some trace of these extraordinary names which had so strongly awakened our curiosity.

The catalogue alone of the books we read with this object would fill a whole chapter, which, al-

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though it might be very instructive, would certainly afford our readers but little amusement. It will suffice, then, to tell them that at the moment at which, discouraged by so many fruitless investigations, we were about to abandon our search, we at length found, guided by the counsels of our illustrious friend, Paulin Pâris, a manuscript in folio, indorsed 4772 or 4773, we do not recollect which, having for title: "Memoir of the Comte de la Fère, touching some Events which passed in France towards the End of the Reign of King Louis XIII. and the Commencement of the Reign of King Louis XIV."

It may be easily imagined how great was our joy, when in turning over this manuscript, our last hope, we found at the twentieth page the name of Athos, at the twenty-seventh the name of Porthos, and at the thirty-first the name of Aramis.

The discovery of a completely unknown manuscript at a period in which historical science is carried to such a high degree appeared almost miraculous. We hastened, therefore, to obtain permission to print it, with the view of presenting ourselves some day with the *pack* of others at the doors of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, if we should not succeed — a very probable thing, by-the-bye — in gaining admission to the Académie Française with our own proper *pack*. This permission, we feel bound to say, was graciously granted; which compels us here to give a public contradiction

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to the slanderers who pretend that we live under a government but moderately indulgent to men of letters.

Now, this is the first part of this precious manuscript which we offer to our readers, restoring to it the title which belongs to it, and entering into an engagement that if (of which we entertain no doubt) this first part should obtain the success it merits, we will publish the second incontinently.

In the mean while, as the godfather is a second father, we beg the reader to lay to our account, and not to that of the Comte de la Fêre, the pleasure or the *ennui* he may experience.

This being understood, let us proceed with our history.

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THE THREE MUSKETEERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE GIFTS OF M. D'ARTAGNAN THE ELDER.

On the first Monday of the month of April, 1626, the market-town of Meung, in which the author of the "Romance of the Rose" was born, appeared to be in as perfect a state of revolution as if the Huguenots had just made a second Rochelle of it. Many citizens, seeing the women flying towards the Grand Street, leaving their children crying at the open doors, hastened to don the cuirass, and supporting their somewhat uncertain courage with a musket or a partisan, directed their steps towards the hostelry of the Jolly Miller, before which was gathered, increasing every minute, a compact group, vociferous and full of curiosity.

In those times panics were common, and few days passed without some city or other enregistering in its archives an event of this kind. There were nobles, who made war against each other; there was the king, who made war against the cardinal; there was Spain, which made war against the king. Then, in addition to these concealed or public, secret or open wars, there were robbers, mendicants, Huguenots, wolves, and scoundrels, who

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made war upon everybody. The citizens always took up arms readily against thieves, wolves, or scoundrels, often against nobles or Huguenots, sometimes against the king, but never against the cardinal or Spain. It resulted, then, from this habit that on the said first Monday of the month of April, 1626, the citizens, on hearing the clamor, and seeing neither the red-and-yellow standard nor the livery of the Duc de Richelieu, rushed towards the hostel of the Jolly Miller. When arrived there, the cause of this hubbub was apparent to all.

A young man, — we can sketch his portrait at a dash. Imagine to yourself a Don Quixote of eighteen; a Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat-of-mail, without his cuisses; a Don Quixote clothed in a woollen doublet, the blue color of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure; face long and brown; high cheek-bones, a sign of sagacity; the maxillary muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which a Gascon may always be detected, even without his cap, — and our young man wore a cap set off with a sort of feather; the eye open and intelligent; the nose hooked, but finely chiselled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey, had it not been for the long sword which, dangling from a leathern baldric, hit against the calves of its owner as he walked and against the rough side of his steed when he was on horseback.

For our young man had a steed which was the observed of all observers. It was a Béarn pony, from twelve to fourteen years old, yellow in his hide, without a hair in his tail, but not without wind-galls on his legs, which, though going with his head lower than his knees, rendering a martingale quite unnecessary, contrived never-

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theless to perform his eight leagues a day. Unfortunately, the qualities of this horse were so well concealed under his strange-colored hide and his unaccountable gait, that at a time when everybody was a connoisseur in horseflesh, the appearance of the aforesaid pony at Meung — which place he had entered about a quarter of an hour before, by the gate of Beaugency — produced an unfavorable feeling, which extended to his rider.

And this feeling had been the more painfully perceived by young D'Artagnan — for so was the Don Quixote of this second Rosinante named — from his not being able to conceal from himself the ridiculous appearance that such a steed gave him, good horseman as he was. He had sighed deeply, therefore, when accepting the gift of the pony from M. d'Artagnan the elder. He was not ignorant that such a beast was worth at least twenty livres; and the words which accompanied the present were above all price.

"My son," said the old Gascon gentleman, in that pure Béarn *patois* of which Henry IV. could never rid himself, — "my son, this horse was born in the house of your father about thirteen years ago, and has remained in it ever since, — which ought to make you love it. Never sell it; allow it to die tranquilly and honorably of old age, and if you make a campaign with it, take as much care of it as you would of an old servant. At court, provided you have ever the honor to go there," continued M. d'Artagnan the elder, — "an honor to which, remember, your ancient nobility gives you right, — sustain worthily your name of *gentleman*, which has been worthily borne by your ancestors for five hundred years, both for your own sake and the sake of those who belong to you. By the latter I mean your relatives and friends. Endure nothing from any one except Monsieur the Cardinal and

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the king. It is by his courage, please to observe, — by his courage alone, — that a gentleman can make his way nowadays. Whoever hesitates for a second perhaps allows the bait to escape which during that exact second fortune held out to him. You are young. You ought to be brave for two reasons: the first is, that you are a Gascon; and the second is, that you are my son. Never fear quarrels, but seek adventures. I have taught you how to handle a sword; you have thews of iron, a wrist of steel. Fight on all occasions. Fight the more for duels being forbidden; since, consequently, there is twice as much courage in fighting. I have nothing to give you, my son, but fifteen crowns, my horse, and the counsels you have just heard. Your mother will add to them a recipe for a certain balsam, which she had from a Bohemian, and which has the miraculous virtue of curing all wounds that do not reach the heart. Take advantage of all, and live happily and long. I have but one word to add, and that is to propose an example to you, — not mine, for I myself have never appeared at court, and have only taken part in religious wars as a volunteer; I speak of M. de Tréville, who was formerly my neighbor, and who had the honor to be, as a child, the playfellow of our king, Louis XIII., whom God preserve! Sometimes their play degenerated into battles, and in these battles the king was not always the stronger. The blows which he received increased greatly his esteem and friendship for M. de Tréville. Afterwards, M. de Tréville fought with others: in his first journey to Paris, five times; from the death of the late king till the young one came of age, without reckoning wars and sieges, seven times; and from that date up to the present day, a hundred times, perhaps! So that in spite of edicts, ordinances, and decrees, there he is, captain of the Musketeers; that is to say, chief of a

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legion of Cæsars, whom the king holds in great esteem, and whom the cardinal dreads, — he who dreads nothing, as it is said. Still further, M. de Tréville gains ten thousand crowns a year; he is therefore a great noble. He began as you begin. Go to him with this letter; and make him your model in order that you may do as he has done."

Upon which M. d'Artagnan the elder girded his own sword round his son, kissed him tenderly on both cheeks, and gave him his benediction.

On leaving the paternal chamber, the young man found his mother, who was waiting for him with the famous recipe of which the counsels we have just repeated would necessitate frequent employment. The adieux were on this side longer and more tender than they had been on the other, — not that M. d'Artagnan did not love his son, who was his only offspring, but M. d'Artagnan was a man, and he would have considered it unworthy of a man to give way to his feelings; whereas Madame d'Artagnan was a woman, and still more, a mother. She wept abundantly; and — let us speak it to the praise of M. d'Artagnan the younger — notwithstanding the efforts he made to remain firm, as a future musketeer ought, nature prevailed, and he shed many tears, of which he succeeded with great difficulty in concealing the half.

The same day the young man set forward on his journey, furnished with the three paternal gifts, which consisted, as we have said, of fifteen crowns, the horse, and the letter for M. de Tréville, — the counsels being thrown into the bargain.

With such a *vade mecum* D'Artagnan was morally and physically an exact copy of the hero of Cervantes, to whom we so happily compared him when our duty of an historian placed us under the necessity of sketching his

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portrait. Don Quixote took windmills for giants, and sheep for armies; D'Artagnan took every smile for an insult, and every look as a provocation, — whence it resulted that from Tarbes to Meung his fist was constantly doubled, or his hand on the hilt of his sword; and yet the fist did not descend upon any jaw, nor did the sword issue from its scabbard. It was not that the sight of the wretched pony did not excite numerous smiles on the countenances of passers-by; but as against the side of this pony rattled a sword of respectable length, and as over this sword gleamed an eye rather ferocious than haughty, these passers-by repressed their hilarity, or if hilarity prevailed over prudence, they endeavored to laugh only on one side, like the masks of the ancients. D'Artagnan, then, remained majestic and intact in his susceptibility, till he came to this unlucky city of Meung.

But there, as he was alighting from his horse at the gate of the Jolly Miller, without any one — host, waiter, or hostler — coming to hold his stirrup or take his horse, D'Artagnan spied, through an open window on the ground-floor, a gentleman, well-made and of good carriage, although of rather a stern countenance, talking with two persons who appeared to listen to him with respect. D'Artagnan fancied quite naturally, according to his custom, that he must be the object of their conversation, and listened. This time D'Artagnan was only in part mistaken; he himself was not in question, but his horse was. The gentleman appeared to be enumerating all his qualities to his auditors; and, as I have said, the auditors seeming to have great deference for the narrator, they every moment burst into fits of laughter. Now, as a half-smile was sufficient to awaken the irascibility of the young man, the effect produced upon him by this vociferous mirth may be easily imagined.

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Nevertheless, D'Artagnan was desirous of examining the appearance of this impertinent personage who ridiculed him. He fixed his haughty eye upon the stranger, and perceived a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, with black and piercing eyes, pale complexion, a strongly marked nose, and a black and well-shaped mustache. He was dressed in a doublet and hose of a violet color, with aiguillettes of the same, without any other ornaments than the customary slashes, through which the shirt appeared. This doublet and hose, though new, were creased, like travelling-clothes for a long time packed in a portmanteau. D'Artagnan made all these remarks with the rapidity of a most minute observer, and doubtless from an instinctive feeling that this unknown was destined to have a great influence over his future life.

Now, as at the moment in which D'Artagnan fixed his eyes upon the gentleman in the violet doublet, the gentleman made one of his most knowing and profound remarks respecting the Béarnese pony, his two auditors laughed even louder than before, and he himself, though contrary to his custom, allowed a pale smile (if I may be allowed to use such an expression) to stray over his countenance. This time there could be no doubt; D'Artagnan was really insulted. Full, then, of this conviction, he pulled his cap down over his eyes, and endeavoring to copy some of the court airs he had picked up in Gascony among young travelling nobles, he advanced with one hand on the hilt of his sword and the other resting on his hip. Unfortunately, as he advanced, his anger increased at every step; and instead of the proper and lofty speech he had prepared as a prelude to his challenge, he found nothing at the tip of his tongue but a gross personality, which he accompanied with a furious gesture.

"I say, sir, you, sir, who are hiding yourself behind

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that shutter— yes, you, sir, tell me what you are laughing at, and we will laugh together!"

The gentleman raised his eyes slowly from the nag to his cavalier, as if he required some time to ascertain whether it could be to him that such strange reproaches were addressed; then, when he could not possibly entertain any doubt of the matter, his eyebrows slightly bent, and with an accent of irony and insolence impossible to be described, he replied to D'Artagnan, "I was not speaking to you, sir."

"But I am speaking to you!" replied the young man, additionally exasperated with this mixture of insolence and good manners, of politeness and scorn.

The unknown looked at him again with a slight smile, and retiring from the window, came out of the hostelry with a slow step, and placed himself before the horse within two paces of D'Artagnan. His quiet manner and the ironical expression of his countenance redoubled the mirth of the persons with whom he had been talking, and who still remained at the window.

D'Artagnan, seeing him approach, drew his sword a foot out of the scabbard.

"This horse is decidedly, or rather has been in his youth, a buttercup," resumed the unknown, continuing the remarks he had begun, and addressing himself to his auditors at the window, without paying the least attention to the exasperation of D'Artagnan, who, however, placed himself between him and them. "It is a color very well known in botany, but till the present time very rare among horses."

"There are people who laugh at the horse that would not dare to laugh at the master," cried the young emulator of the furious Tréville.

"I do not often laugh, sir," replied the unknown, "as

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you may perceive by the expression of my countenance; but nevertheless I retain the privilege of laughing when I please."

"And I," cried D'Artagnan, "will allow no man to laugh when it displeases me!"

"Indeed, sir," continued the unknown more calm than ever; "well, that is perfectly right!" and turning on his heel, was about to re-enter the hostelry by the front gate, beneath which D'Artagnan on arriving had observed a saddled horse.

But D'Artagnan was not of a character to allow a man to escape him thus who had had the insolence to ridicule him. He drew his sword entirely from the scabbard, and followed him, crying, —

"Turn, turn, Master Joker, lest I strike you behind!"

"Strike me!" said the other, turning on his heels, and surveying the young man with as much astonishment as contempt. "Why, my good fellow, you must be mad!" Then, in a suppressed tone, as if speaking to himself, "This is annoying," continued he. "What a godsend this would be for his Majesty, who is seeking everywhere for brave fellows to recruit his Musketeers!"

He had scarcely finished, when D'Artagnan made such a furious lunge at him that if he had not sprung nimbly backwards, it is probable he would have jested for the last time. The unknown, then perceiving that the matter went beyond raillery, drew his sword, saluted his adversary, and seriously placed himself on guard. But at the same moment his two auditors, accompanied by the host, fell upon D'Artagnan with sticks, shovels, and tongs. This caused so rapid and complete a diversion from the attack, that D'Artagnan's adversary, while the latter turned round to face this shower of blows, sheathed his sword with the same precision, and instead of an actor,

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which he had nearly been, became a spectator of the fight, — a part in which he acquitted himself with his usual impassibility, muttering, nevertheless, "A plague upon these Gascons! Replace him on his orange horse, and let him begone!"

"Not before I have killed you, poltroon!" cried D'Artagnan, making the best face possible, and never retreating one step before his three assailants, who continued to shower blows upon him.

"Another gasconade!" murmured the gentleman. "By my honor, these Gascons are incorrigible! Keep up the dance, then, since he will have it so. When he is tired, he will perhaps tell us that he has enough of it."

But the unknown knew not the headstrong personage he had to do with; D'Artagnan was not the man ever to cry for quarter. The fight was therefore prolonged for some seconds; but at length D'Artagnan dropped his sword, which was broken in two pieces by the blow of a stick. Another blow full upon his forehead at the same moment brought him to the ground, covered with blood and almost fainting.

It was at this moment that people came flocking to the scene of action from all sides. The host, fearful of consequences, with the help of his servants carried the wounded man into the kitchen, where some trifling attentions were bestowed upon him.

As to the gentleman, he resumed his place at the window, and surveyed the crowd with a certain impatience, evidently annoyed by their remaining undispersed.

"Well, how is it with this madman?" exclaimed he, turning round as the noise of the door announced the entrance of the host, who came to inquire if he was unhurt.

"Your Excellency is safe and sound?" asked the host.

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"Oh, yes! perfectly safe and sound, my good host; and I wish to know what is become of our young man."

"He is better," said the host; "he fainted quite away."

"Indeed!" said the gentleman.

"But before he fainted, he collected all his strength to challenge you, and to defy you while challenging you."

"Why, this fellow must be the Devil in person!" cried the unknown.

"Oh, no, your Excellency, he is not the Devil," replied the host, with a grin of contempt; "for during his fainting we rummaged his valise, and found nothing but a clean shirt and twelve crowns, — which, however, did not prevent his saying, as he was fainting, that if such a thing had happened in Paris you should have instantly repented of it, while here you would only have cause to repent of it at a later period."

"Then," said the unknown, coolly, "he must be some prince in disguise."

"I have told you this, good sir," resumed the host, "in order that you may be on your guard."

"Did he name no one in his passion?"

"Yes; he struck his pocket and said, 'We shall see what M. de Tréville will think of this insult offered to his *protégé*.'"

"M. de Tréville?" said the unknown, becoming attentive, "he put his hand upon his pocket while pronouncing the name of M. de Tréville? Now, my dear host, while your young man was insensible, you did not fail, I am quite sure, to ascertain what that pocket contained. What was there in it?"

"A letter addressed to M. de Tréville, captain of the Musketeers."

"Indeed!"

"Exactly as I have the honor to tell your Excellency."

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The host, who was not endowed with great perspicacity, did not observe the expression which his words had given to the physiognomy of the unknown. The latter rose from the front of the window, upon the sill of which he had leaned with his elbow, and knitted his brows like a man disquieted.

"The devil!" murmured he, between his teeth. "Can Tréville have set this Gascon upon me? He is very young; but a sword-thrust is a sword-thrust, whatever be the age of him who gives it, and a youth is less to be suspected than an older man," and the unknown fell into a reverie which lasted some minutes. "A weak obstacle is sometimes sufficient to overthrow a great design."

"Host," said he, "could you not contrive to get rid of this frantic boy for me? In conscience, I cannot kill him; and yet," added he, with a coldly menacing expression, — "and yet he annoys me. Where is he?"

"In my wife's chamber, on the first flight, where they are dressing his wounds."

"His things and his bag are with him? Has he taken off his doublet?"

"On the contrary, everything is in the kitchen. But if he annoys you, this young fool —"

"To be sure he does. He causes a disturbance in your hostelry, which respectable people cannot put up with. Go; make out my bill, and notify my servant."

"What, Monsieur, will you leave us so soon?"

'You know that very well, as I gave the order to saddle my horse. Have they not obeyed me?"

"It is done; as your Excellency may have observed, your horse is in the great gateway, ready saddled for your departure."

"That is well; do as I have directed you, then."

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"What the devil!" said the host to himself. "Can he be afraid of this boy?" But an imperious glance from the unknown stopped him short; he bowed humbly, and retired.

"It is not necessary for Milady[1] to be seen by this fellow," continued the stranger. "She will soon pass; she is already late. I had better get on horseback, and go and meet her. I should like, however, to know what this letter addressed to Tréville contains." And the unknown, muttering to himself, directed his steps towards the kitchen.

In the mean time the host, who entertained no doubt that it was the presence of the young man that drove the unknown from his hostelry, re-ascended to his wife's chamber, and found D'Artagnan just recovering his senses. Giving him to understand that the police would deal with him pretty severely for having sought a quarrel with a great lord, — for in the opinion of the host the unknown could be nothing less than a great lord, — he insisted that notwithstanding his weakness D'Artagnan should get up and depart as quickly as possible. D'Artagnan, half stupefied, without his doublet, and with his head bound up in a linen cloth, arose then, and urged by the host, began to descend the stairs; but on arriving at the kitchen, the first thing he saw was his antagonist talking calmly at the step of a heavy carriage, drawn by two large Norman horses.

His interlocutor, whose head appeared through the carriage window, was a woman of from twenty to two-and-twenty years. We have already observed with what rapidity D'Artagnan seized the expression of a counte-

[1] We are well aware that this term, *milady*, is only properly used when followed by a family name. But we find it thus in the manuscript, and we do not choose to take upon ourselves to alter it.

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nance. He perceived then, at a glance, that this woman was young and beautiful; and her style of beauty struck him the more forcibly from its being totally different from that of the southern countries in which D'Artagnan had hitherto resided. She was pale and fair, with long curls falling in profusion over her shoulders, had large blue, languishing eyes, rosy lips, and hands of alabaster. She was talking with great animation with the unknown.

"His Eminence, then, orders me —" said the lady.

"To return instantly to England, and to inform him as soon as the duke leaves London."

"And as to my other instructions?" asked the fair traveller.

"They are contained in this box, which you will not open until you are on the other side of the Channel."

"Very well; and you, — what will you do?"

"I, — I return to Paris."

"What, without chastising this insolent boy?" asked the lady.

The unknown was about to reply; but at the moment he opened his mouth, D'Artagnan, who had heard all, precipitated himself over the threshold of the door.

"This insolent boy chastises others," cried he; "and I hope that this time he whom he ought to chastise will not escape him as before."

"Will not escape him?" replied the unknown, knitting his brow.

"No; before a woman you would not dare to fly, I presume?"

"Remember," said Milady, seeing the unknown lay his hand on his sword, — "remember that the least delay may ruin everything."

"You are right," cried the gentleman; "begone then, on your part, and I will depart as quickly on mine."

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And bowing to the lady, he sprang into his saddle, while her coachman applied his whip vigorously to his horses. The two interlocutors thus separated, taking opposite directions, at full gallop.

"Your reckoning!" vociferated the host, whose regard for the traveller was changed into profound contempt on seeing him depart without settling his account.

"Pay him, booby!" cried the unknown to his servant, without checking the speed of his horse; and the man, after throwing two or three silver pieces at the foot of mine host, galloped after his master.

"Base coward! false gentleman!" cried D'Artagnan, springing forward, in his turn, after the servant. But his wound had rendered him too weak to support such an exertion. Scarcely had he gone ten steps when his ears began to tingle, a faintness seized him, a cloud of blood passed over his eyes, and he fell in the middle of the street, crying still, "Coward! coward! coward!"

"He is a coward indeed," grumbled the host, drawing near to D'Artagnan, and endeavoring by this little flattery to make up matters with the young man, as the heron of the fable did with the snail he had despised the evening before.

"Yes, a base coward," murmured D'Artagnan; "but she, — she was very beautiful."

"What *she?*" demanded the host.

"Milady," faltered D'Artagnan, and fainted a second time.

"Ah! it's all one," said the host; "I have lost two customers, but this one remains, of whom I am pretty certain for some days to come. There will be eleven crowns gained."

It is to be remembered that eleven crowns was just the sum that remained in D'Artagnan's purse.

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The host had reckoned upon eleven days of confinement at a crown a day, but he had reckoned without his guest. On the following morning, at five o'clock D'Artagnan arose, and descending to the kitchen without help, asked, among other ingredients the list of which has not come down to us, for some oil, some wine, and some rosemary, and with his mother's recipe in his hand composed a balsam, with which he anointed his numerous wounds, replacing his bandages himself, and positively refusing the assistance of any doctor. Thanks, no doubt, to the efficacy of the Bohemian balsam, and perhaps also, thanks to the absence of any doctor, D'Artagnan walked about that same evening, and was almost cured by the morrow.

But when the time came to pay for this rosemary, this oil, and the wine, the only expense the master had incurred, as he had preserved a strict abstinence, — while, on the contrary, the yellow horse, by the account of the hostler at least, had eaten three times as much as a horse of his size could reasonably be supposed to have done, — D'Artagnan found nothing in his pocket but his little old velvet purse with the eleven crowns it contained; for as to the letter addressed to M. de Tréville, it had disappeared.

The young man commenced his search for the letter with the greatest patience, turning out his pockets of all kinds over and over again, rummaging and re-rummaging in his valise, and opening and re-opening his purse; but when he had come to the conviction that the letter was not to be found, he flew, for the third time, into such a rage as was near costing him a fresh consumption of wine, oil, and rosemary, — for upon seeing this hot-headed youth become exasperated and threaten to destroy everything in the establishment if his letter were not found, the host seized a spit, his wife a broom-handle, and the servants the same sticks they had used the day before.

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"My letter of recommendation!" cried D'Artagnan, "my letter of recommendation! or, the holy blood, I will spit you all like ortolans!"

Unfortunately, there was one circumstance which created a powerful obstacle to the accomplishment of this threat; which was, as we have related, that his sword had been in his first conflict broken in two, and which he had entirely forgotten. Hence it resulted that when D'Artagnan proceeded to draw his sword in earnest, he found himself purely and simply armed with a stump of a sword about eight or ten inches in length, which the host had carefully placed in the scabbard. As to the rest of the blade, the master had slyly put that on one side to make himself a larding-pin.

But this deception would probably not have stopped our fiery young man if the host had not reflected that the reclamation which his guest made was perfectly just.

"But after all," said he, lowering the point of his spit, "where is this letter?"

"Yes, where is this letter?" cried D'Artagnan. "In the first place, I warn you that that letter is for M. de Tréville, and it must be found; or if it be not found, he will know how to find it."

This threat completed the intimidation of the host. After the king and the cardinal, M. de Tréville was the man whose name was perhaps most frequently repeated by the military, and even by citizens. There was, to be sure, Father Joseph, but his name was never pronounced but with a subdued voice, such was the terror inspired by his Gray Eminence, as the cardinal's familiar was called.

Throwing down his spit, and ordering his wife to do the same with her broom-handle, and the servants with their sticks, he set the first example of commencing an earnest search for the lost letter.

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"Does the letter contain anything valuable?" demanded the host, after a few minutes of useless investigation.

"Zounds! I think it does, indeed!" cried the Gascon, who reckoned upon this letter for making his way at court. "It contained my fortune!"

"Bills upon Spain?" asked the disturbed host.

"Bills upon his Majesty's private treasury," answered D'Artagnan, who, reckoning upon entering into the king's service in consequence of this recommendation, believed he could make this somewhat hazardous reply without telling a falsehood.

"The devil!" cried the host, at his wit's end.

"But it's of no importance," continued D'Artagnan, with national assurance; "it's of no importance. The money is nothing; that letter was everything. I would rather have lost a thousand pistoles than have lost it." He would not have risked more if he had said twenty thousand; but a certain juvenile modesty restrained him.

A ray of light all at once broke upon the mind of the host as he was giving himself to the Devil upon finding nothing.

"That letter is not lost!" cried he.

"What!" said D'Artagnan.

"No; it has been stolen from you."

"Stolen! by whom?"

"By the gentleman who was here yesterday. He came down into the kitchen, where your doublet was. He remained there some time alone. I would lay a wager he has stolen it."

"Do you think so?" answered D'Artagnan, but little convinced, as he knew better than any one else how entirely personal the value of this letter was, and saw nothing in it likely to tempt cupidity. The fact was that

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none of the servants, none of the travellers present, could have gained anything by being possessed of this paper.

"Do you say," resumed D'Artagnan, "that you suspect that impertinent gentleman?"

"I tell you I am sure of it," continued the host. "When I informed him that your lordship was the *protégé* of M. de Tréville, and that you even had a letter for that illustrious gentleman, he appeared to be very much disturbed, and asked me where that letter was, and immediately came down into the kitchen, where he knew your doublet was."

"Then that 's my thief," replied D'Artagnan. "I will complain to M. de Tréville, and M. de Tréville will complain to the king." He then drew two crowns majestically from his purse and gave them to the host, who accompanied him, cap in hand, to the gate, and remounted his yellow horse, which bore him without any further accident to the gate of St. Antoine at Paris, where his owner sold him for three crowns, — which was a very good price, considering that D'Artagnan had ridden him hard during the last stage. Thus the dealer to whom D'Artagnan sold him for the said nine livres did not conceal from the young man that he only gave that enormous sum for him on account of the originality of his color.

Thus D'Artagnan entered Paris on foot, carrying his little packet under his arm, and walked about till he found an apartment to be let on terms suited to the scantiness of his means. This chamber was a sort of garret, situated in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, near the Luxembourg.

As soon as the earnest-money was paid, D'Artagnan took possession of his lodging, and passed the remainder of the day in sewing on to his doublet and hose some

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ornamental braiding which his mother had taken off from an almost new doublet of the elder M. d'Artagnan, and which she had given her son secretly. Next he went to the Quai de Ferraille to have a new blade put to his sword, and then returned towards the Louvre, inquiring of the first musketeer he met for the situation of the hôtel of M. de Tréville, which proved to be in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier; that is to say, in the immediate vicinity of the chamber hired by D'Artagnan, — a circumstance which appeared to furnish a happy augury for the success of his journey.

After this, satisfied with the way in which he had conducted himself at Meung, without remorse for the past, confident in the present, and full of hope for the future, he retired to bed and slept the sleep of the brave.

This sleep, provincial as it was, brought him to nine o'clock in the morning; at which hour he rose, in order to repair to the residence of M. de Tréville, the third personage in the kingdom in paternal estimation.

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CHAPTER II.

THE ANTECHAMBER OF M. DE TRÉVILLE.

M. DE TROISVILLE, as his family was still called in Gascony, or M. de Tréville, as he has ended by styling himself in Paris, had really commenced life as D'Artagnan now did; that is to say, without a sou in his pocket, but with a fund of audacity, shrewdness, and intelligence which makes the poorest Gascon gentleman often derive more in his hope from the paternal inheritance than the richest Perigordian or Berrichan gentleman derives in reality from his. His insolent bravery, his still more insolent success at a time when blows poured down like hail, had borne him to the top of that difficult ladder called Court Favor, which he had climbed four steps at a time.

He was the friend of the king, who honored highly, as every one knows, the memory of his father, Henry IV. The father of M. de Tréville had served him so faithfully in his wars against the League that in default of money, — a thing to which the Béarnais was accustomed all his life, and who constantly paid his debts with that of which he never stood in need of borrowing, that is to say, with ready wit, — in default of money, we repeat, he authorized him, after the reduction of Paris, to assume for his arms a golden lion passant upon gules, with the motto of *Fidelis et fortis.* This was a great matter in the way of honor, but very little in the way of wealth; so that when the illustrious companion of the great Henry died, the only inheritance he was able to leave his so

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was his sword and his motto. Thanks to this double gift and the spotless name that accompanied it, M. de Tréville was admitted into the household of the young prince; where he made such good use of his sword, and was so faithful to his motto, that Louis XIII., one of the good blades of his kingdom, was accustomed to say that if he had a friend who was about to fight, he would advise him to choose as a second, himself first, and Tréville next, — or even, perhaps, before himself.

Thus Louis XIII. had a real liking for Tréville, — a royal liking, a self-interested liking, it is true, but still a liking. At that unhappy period it was an important consideration to be surrounded by such men as Tréville. Many might take for their device the epithet of *strong*, which formed the second part of his motto, but very few gentlemen could lay claim to the *faithful*, which constituted the first. Tréville was one of these latter. His was one of those rare organizations, endowed with an obedient intelligence like that of the dog, with a blind valor, a quick eye, and a prompt hand; to whom sight appeared only to be given to see if the king were dissatisfied with any one, and with the hand to strike this displeasing personage, whether a Besme, a Maurevers, a Poltiot de Méré, or a Vitry. In short, up to this period nothing had been wanting to Tréville but opportunity; but he was ever on the watch for it, and he faithfully promised himself that he would not fail to seize it by its three hairs whenever it came within reach of his hand. At last Louis XIII. made Tréville the captain of his Musketeers, who were to Louis XIII. in devotedness, or rather in fanaticism, what his Ordinaries had been to Henry III., and his Scotch Guard to Louis XI.

On his part, the cardinal was not behind with the king in this respect. When he saw the formidable and chosen

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body by which Louis XIII. surrounded himself, this second, or rather this first king of France, became desirous that he too should have his guard. He had his Musketeers therefore, as Louis XIII. had his, and these two powerful rivals vied with each other in procuring, not only from all the provinces of France, but even from all foreign states, the most celebrated swordsmen. It was not uncommon for Richelieu and Louis XIII. to dispute over their evening game of chess upon the merits of their servants. Each boasted the bearing and the courage of his own people. While exclaiming loudly against duels and broils, they excited them secretly to quarrel, deriving an immoderate satisfaction or genuine regret from the success or defeat of their own combatants. We learn this from the memoirs of a man who was concerned in some few of these defeats and in many of these victories.

Tréville had grasped the weak side of his master; and it was to this address that he owed the long and constant favor of a king who has not left the reputation behind him of being very faithful in his friendships. He paraded his Musketeers before the Cardinal Armand Duplessis with an insolent air which made the gray mustache of his Eminence curl with ire. Tréville understood admirably the war method of that period, in which he who could not live at the expense of the enemy must live at the expense of his compatriots. His soldiers formed a legion of devil-may-care fellows, perfectly undisciplined towards all but himself.

Loose, half-drunk, imposing, the king's Musketeers, or rather M. de Tréville's, spread themselves about in the cabarets, in the public walks and the public sports, shouting, twisting their mustaches, clanking their swords, and taking great pleasure in annoying the Guards of the cardinal whenever they could fall in with them; then draw-

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ing in the open streets, as if it were the best of all possible sports; sometimes killed, but sure in that case to be both wept and avenged; often killing others, but then certain of not rotting in prison, M. de Tréville being there to claim them. Thus M. de Tréville was praised to the highest note by these men, who adored him, and who, ruffians as they were, trembled before him like scholars before their master, obedient to his least word, and ready to sacrifice themselves to wash out the smallest insult.

M. de Tréville employed this powerful weapon for the king, in the first place, and the friends of the king — and then for himself and his own friends. For the rest, in the memoirs of this period, which has left so many memoirs, one does not find this worthy gentleman blamed even by his enemies; and he had many such among men of the pen as well as among men of the sword. In no instance, let us say, was this worthy gentleman accused of deriving personal advantage from the co-operation of his minions. Endowed with a rare genius for intrigue which rendered him the equal of the ablest intriguers, he remained an honest man. Still further, in spite of sword-thrusts which weaken, and painful exercises which fatigue, he had become one of the most gallant frequenters of revels, one of the most insinuating lady's men, one of the softest whisperers of interesting nothings of his day; the *bonnes fortunes* of Tréville were talked of as those of M. de Bassompierre had been talked of twenty years before, and that was not saying a little. The captain of the Musketeers was therefore admired, feared, and loved; and this constitutes the zenith of human fortune.

Louis XIV. absorbed all the smaller stars of his court in his own vast radiance; but his father, a sun *pluribus impar*, left his personal splendor to each of his favorites, his individual value to each of his courtiers. In addition

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to the levees of the king and cardinal, there might be reckoned in Paris at that time more than two hundred smaller but still noteworthy levees. Among these two hundred levees, that of Tréville was one of the most sought.

The court of his hôtel, situated in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, resembled a camp from by six o'clock in the morning in summer and eight o'clock in winter. From fifty to sixty musketeers, who appeared to replace one another in order always to present an imposing number, paraded constantly, armed to the teeth and ready for anything. On one of those immense staircases, upon whose space modern civilization would build a whole house, ascended and descended the office-seekers of Paris, who ran after any sort of favor, — gentlemen from the provinces anxious to be enrolled, and servants in all sorts of liveries, bringing and carrying messages between their masters and M. de Tréville. In the antechamber, upon long circular benches, reposed the elect; that is to say, those who were called. In this apartment a continued buzzing prevailed from morning till night, while M. de Tréville, in his office contiguous to this antechamber, received visits, listened to complaints, gave his orders, and like the king in his balcony at the Louvre, had only to place himself at the window to review both his men and arms.

The day on which D'Artagnan presented himself the assemblage was imposing, particularly for a provincial just arriving from his province. It is true that this provincial was a Gascon; and that, particularly at this period, the compatriots of D'Artagnan had the reputation of not being easily intimidated. When he had once passed the massive door covered with long square-headed nails, he fell into the midst of a troop of swordsmen, who

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crossed one another in their passage, calling out, quarrelling, and playing tricks one with another. In order to make one's way amid these turbulent and conflicting waves, it was necessary to be an officer, a great noble, or a pretty woman.

It was, then, into the midst of this tumult and disorder that our young man advanced with a beating heart, ranging his long rapier up his lanky leg, and keeping one hand on the edge of his cap, with that half-smile of the embarrassed provincial who wishes to put on a good face. When he had passed one group he began to breathe more freely; but he could not help observing that they turned round to look at him, and for the first time in his life D'Artagnan, who had till that day entertained a very good opinion of himself, felt ridiculous.

Arrived at the staircase, it was still worse. There were four musketeers on the bottom steps, amusing themselves with the following exercise, while ten or twelve of their comrades waited upon the landing-place to take their turn in the sport.

One of them, stationed upon the top stair, naked sword in hand, prevented, or at least endeavored to prevent, the three others from ascending.

These three others fenced against him with their agile swords. D'Artagnan at first took these weapons for foils, and believed them to be buttoned; but he soon perceived by certain scratches that every weapon was pointed and sharpened, and that at each of these scratches not only the spectators, but even the actors themselves, laughed like so many madmen.

He who at the moment occupied the upper step kept his adversaries marvellously in check. A circle was formed around them. The conditions required that at every hit the man touched should quit the game, yielding

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his turn for the benefit of the adversary who had hit him. In five minutes three were slightly wounded, one on the hand, another on the chin, and the third on the ear, by the defender of the stair, who himself remained intact, — a piece of skill which was worth to him, according to the rules agreed upon, three turns of favor.

However difficult it might be, or rather as he pretended it was, to astonish our young traveller, this pastime really astonished him. He had seen in his province — that land in which heads become so easily heated — a few of the preliminaries of duels; but the daring of these four fencers appeared to him the strongest he had ever heard of, even in Gascony. He believed himself transported into that famous country of giants into which Gulliver afterwards went and was so frightened; and yet he had not gained the goal, for there were still the landing-place and the antechamber.

On the landing they were no longer fighting, but amused themselves with stories about women, and in the antechamber, with stories about the court. On the landing D'Artagnan blushed; in the antechamber he trembled. His warm and fickle imagination, which in Gascony had rendered him formidable to young chambermaids, and even sometimes to their mistresses, had never dreamed, even in moments of delirium, of half the amorous wonders, or a quarter of the feats of gallantry which were here set forth in connection with names the best known, and with details the least concealed. But if his morals were shocked on the landing, his respect for the cardinal was scandalized in the antechamber. There, to his great astonishment, D'Artagnan heard the policy which made all Europe tremble criticised aloud and openly, as well as the private life of the cardinal, which so many great nobles had been punished for trying to pry into. That

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great man who was so revered by D'Artagnan the elder served as an object of ridicule to the Musketeers of Tréville, who cracked their jokes upon his bandy legs and his crooked back. Some sang ballads about Madame d'Aiguillon, his mistress, and Madame Cambalet, his niece; while others formed parties and plans to annoy the pages and guards of the cardinal duke, — all, things which appeared to D'Artagnan monstrous impossibilities.

Nevertheless, when the name of the king was now and then uttered unthinkingly amid all these cardinal jests, a sort of gag seemed to close for a moment all these jeering mouths. They looked hesitatingly around them, and appeared to doubt the thickness of the partition between them and the office of M. de Tréville; but a fresh allusion soon brought back the conversation to his Eminence, and then the laughter recovered its loudness, and the light was not withheld from any of his actions.

"Certes, these fellows will all be either imprisoned or hung," thought the terrified D'Artagnan, "and I, no doubt, with them; for from the moment I have either listened to or heard them, I shall be held as an accomplice. What would my good father say, who so strongly pointed out to me the respect due to the cardinal, if he knew I was in the society of such pagans?"

We have no need, therefore, to say that D'Artagnan dared not join in the conversation, only he looked with all his eyes and listened with all his ears, stretching his five senses so as to lose nothing; and despite his confidence in the paternal monitions, he felt himself carried by his tastes and led by his instincts to praise rather than to blame the unheard-of things which were taking place.

Although he was a perfect stranger in the crowd of M. de Tréville's courtiers, and this his first appearance in that place, he was at length noticed, and somebody came and

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asked him what he wanted. At this demand D'Artagnan gave his name very modestly, emphasized the title of compatriot, and begged the servant who had put the question to him to request a moment's audience of M. de Tréville, — a request which the other, with an air of protection, promised to transmit in due season.

D'Artagnan, a little recovered from his first surprise, had now leisure to study costumes and physiognomy.

The centre of the most animated group was a musketeer of great height, and haughty countenance, dressed in a costume so peculiar as to attract general attention. He did not wear the uniform cloak, — which was not obligatory at that epoch of less liberty but more independence, — but a cerulean blue doublet, a little faded and worn, and over this a magnificent baldric, worked in gold, which shone like water-ripples in the sun. A long cloak of crimson velvet fell in graceful folds from his shoulders, disclosing in front the splendid baldric, from which was suspended a gigantic rapier.

This musketeer had just come off guard, complained of having a cold, and coughed from time to time affectedly. It was for this reason, as he said to those around him, that he had put on his cloak; and while he spoke with a lofty air, and twisted his mustache disdainfully, all admired his embroidered baldric, and D'Artagnan more than any one.

"What would you have?" said the musketeer. "The fashion is coming in. It is a folly, I admit, but still it is the fashion. Besides, one must lay out one's inheritance somehow."

"Ah, Porthos!" cried one of his companions, "don't try to make us believe you obtained that baldric by paternal generosity. It was given to you by that veiled lady I met you with the other Sunday, near the gate St. Honoré."

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"No; upon honor, and by the faith of a gentleman, I bought it with the contents of my own purse," answered he whom they designated by the name of Porthos.

"Yes; about in the same manner," said another musketeer, "that I bought this new purse with what my mistress put into the old one."

"It 's true, though," said Porthos; "and the proof is that I paid twelve pistoles for it."

The wonder was increased, though the doubt continued to exist.

"Is it not true, Aramis?" said Porthos, turning towards another musketeer.

This other musketeer formed a perfect contrast to his interrogator, who had just designated him by the name of Aramis. He was a stout man, of about two or three and twenty, with an open, ingenuous countenance, a black, mild eye, and cheeks rosy and downy as an autumn peach. His delicate mustache marked a perfectly straight line upon his upper lip; he appeared to dread to lower his hands lest their veins should swell, and he pinched the tips of his ears from time to time to preserve their delicate pink transparency. Habitually he spoke little and slowly, bowed frequently, laughed without noise, showing his teeth, which were fine, and of which, as of the rest of his person, he appeared to take great care. He answered the appeal of his friend by an affirmative nod of the head.

This affirmation appeared to dispel all doubts with regard to the baldric. They continued to admire it, but said no more about it; and with a rapid change of thought, the conversation passed suddenly to another subject.

"What do you think of the story Chalais's esquire relates?" asked another musketeer, without addressing

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any one in particular, but on the contrary speaking to everybody.

"And what does he say?" asked Porthos, in a self-sufficient tone.

"He relates that he met at Brussels Rochefort, the *âme damnée* of the cardinal, disguised as a capuchin, and that this cursed Rochefort, thanks to his disguise, had tricked M. de Laigues, like a ninny as he is."

"A ninny, indeed!" said Porthos; "but is the matter certain?"

"I had it from Aramis," replied the musketeer.

"Indeed?"

"Why, you knew it, Porthos," said Aramis. "I told you of it yesterday. Let us say no more about it."

"Say no more about it? That's *your* opinion!" replied Porthos. "Say no more about it! *Peste!* you come to your conclusions quickly. What! the cardinal sets a spy upon a gentleman, has his letters stolen from him by means of a traitor, a brigand, a rascal, — has, with the help of this spy, and thanks to this correspondence, Chalais's throat cut, under the stupid pretext that he wanted to kill the king and marry Monsieur to the queen! Nobody knew a word of this enigma. You unravelled it yesterday to the great satisfaction of all; and while we are still gaping with wonder at the news, you come and tell us to-day, 'Let us say no more about it.'"

"Well, then, let us talk about it, since you desire it," replied Aramis, patiently.

"This Rochefort," cried Porthos, "if I were the esquire of poor Chalais, should pass a minute or two very uncomfortably with me."

"And you, — you would pass rather a sad quarter-hour with the Red Duke," replied Aramis.

"Oh, the Red Duke! Bravo! bravo! The Red Duke!"

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cried Porthos, clapping his hands and nodding his head. "The Red Duke is capital. I'll circulate that saying, be assured, my dear fellow. Who says this Aramis is not a wit? What a misfortune it is you did not follow your first vocation; what a delicious abbé you would have made!"

"Oh, it's only a temporary postponement," replied Aramis; "I shall be one, some day. You very well know, Porthos, that I continue to study theology for that purpose."

"He will be one, as he says," cried Porthos; "he will be one, sooner or later."

"Sooner," said Aramis.

"He only waits for one thing to determine him to resume his cassock, which hangs behind his uniform," said another musketeer.

"What is he waiting for?" asked another.

"Only till the queen has given an heir to the crown of France."

"No jesting upon that subject, gentlemen," said Porthos; "thank God, the queen is still of an age to give one!"

"They say that M. de Buckingham is in France," replied Aramis, with a significant smile which gave to this sentence, apparently so simple, a tolerably scandalous meaning.

"Aramis, my good friend, this time you are wrong," interrupted Porthos. "Your wit is always leading you beyond bounds; if M. de Tréville heard you, you would repent of speaking thus."

"Are you going to give me a lesson, Porthos?" cried Aramis, from whose usually mild eye a flash passed like lightning.

"My dear fellow, be a musketeer or an abbé. Be one

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or the other, but not both," replied Porthos. "You know what Athos told you the other day; you eat at everybody's mess. Ah, don't be angry, I beg of you, that would be useless; you know what is agreed upon between you, Athos, and me. You go to Madame d'Aiguillon's, and you pay your court to her; you go to Madame de Bois-Tracy's, the cousin of Madame de Chevreuse, and you pass for being far advanced in the good graces of that lady. Oh, good Lord! don't trouble yourself to reveal your good luck; no one asks for your secret, — all the world knows your discretion. But since you possess that virtue, why the devil don't you make use of it with respect to her Majesty? Let whoever likes talk of the king and the cardinal, and how he likes; but the queen is sacred, and if any one speaks of her, let it be respectfully."

"Porthos, you are as vain as Narcissus; I plainly tell you so," replied Aramis. "You know I hate moralizing, except when it is done by Athos. As to you, good sir, you wear too magnificent a baldric to be strong on that head. I will be an abbé if it suits me. In the mean while I am a musketeer; in that quality I say what I please, and at this moment it pleases me to say that you weary me."

"Aramis!"

"Porthos!"

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried the surrounding group.

"M. de Tréville awaits M. d'Artagnan," cried a servant, throwing open the door of the cabinet.

At this announcement, during which the door remained open, every one became mute, and amid the general silence the young man crossed part of the length of the antechamber, and entered the apartment of the captain of the Musketeers, congratulating himself with all his heart at having so narrowly escaped the end of this strange quarrel.

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CHAPTER III.

THE AUDIENCE.

M. DE TRÉVILLE was at the moment in rather ill-humor, nevertheless he saluted the young man politely, who bowed to the very ground; and he smiled on receiving D'Artagnan's response, the Béarnese accent of which recalled to him at the same time his youth and his country, — a double remembrance which makes a man smile at all ages; but stepping towards the antechamber, and making a sign to D'Artagnan with his hand, as if to ask his permission to finish with others before he began with him, he called three times, with a louder voice at each time, so that he ran through the intervening tones between the imperative accent and the angry accent.

"Athos! Porthos! Aramis!"

The two musketeers with whom we have already made acquaintance, and who answered to the last two of these three names, immediately quitted the group of which they formed a part, and advanced towards the cabinet, the door of which closed after them as soon as they had entered. Their appearance, although it was not quite at ease, excited by its carelessness, at once full of dignity and submission, the admiration of D'Artagnan, who beheld in these two men demi-gods, and in their leader an Olympian Jupiter, armed with all his thunders.

When the two musketeers had entered; when the door was closed behind them; when the buzzing murmur of the antechamber, to which the summons which had been

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made had doubtless furnished fresh food, had recommenced; when M. de Tréville had three or four times paced in silence, and with a frowning brow, the whole length of his cabinet, passing each time before Porthos and Aramis, who were as upright and silent as if on parade, — he stopped all at once full in front of them, and covering them from head to foot with an angry look, "Do you know what the king said to me," cried he, "and that no longer ago than yesterday evening, — do you know, gentlemen?"

"No," replied the two musketeers, after a moment's silence, "no, sir, we do not."

"But I hope that you will do us the honor to tell us," added Aramis, in his politest tone, and with the most graceful bow.

"He told me that he should henceforth recruit his Musketeers from among the Guards of Monsieur the Cardinal."

"The Guards of the cardinal! and why so?" asked Porthos, warmly.

"Because he plainly perceives that his piquette [1] stands in need of being enlivened by a mixture of good wine."

The two musketeers reddened to the whites of their eyes. D'Artagnan did not know where he was, and wished himself a hundred feet under ground.

"Yes, yes," continued M. de Tréville, growing warmer as he spoke, "and his Majesty was right; for, upon my honor, it is true that the Musketeers make but a miserable figure at court. The cardinal related yesterday while playing with the king, with an air of condolence very displeasing to me, that the day before yesterday those *damned Musketeers*, those *dare-devils*, — he dwelt upon those words with an ironical tone still more displeasing to me, — those *braggarts*, added he, glancing at me with his tiger-cat's eye,

[1] A watered liquor, made from the second pressure of the grape.

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had made a riot in the Rue Férou in a cabaret, and that a party of his Guards (I thought he was going to laugh in my face) had been forced to arrest the rioters. *Morbleu!* you must know something about it. Arrest musketeers! You were among them — you were! Don't deny it; you were recognized, and the cardinal named you. But it 's all my fault; yes, it 's all my fault, because it is myself who select my men. You, Aramis, why the devil did you ask me for a uniform, when you would have been so much better in a cassock? And you, Porthos, do you only wear such a fine golden baldric to suspend a sword of straw from it? And Athos — I don't see Athos. Where is he?"

"Sir," replied Aramis, in a sorrowful tone, "he is very ill, very ill."

"Ill, — very ill, say you? And of what malady?"

"It is feared that it may be the small-pox, sir," replied Porthos, desirous of taking his turn in the conversation; "and what is serious is that it will certainly spoil his face."

"The small-pox! That 's a great story to tell me, Porthos! Sick of the small-pox at his age! No, no; but wounded without doubt, killed, perhaps. Ah, if I knew! S' blood! Messieurs Musketeers, I will not have this haunting of bad places, this quarrelling in the streets, this sword-play at the cross-ways; and above all, I will not have occasion given for the cardinal's Guards, who are brave, quiet, skilful men who never put themselves in a position to be arrested, and who, besides, never allow themselves to be arrested, to laugh at you! I am sure of it, — they would prefer dying on the spot to being arrested, or taking a back step. To save yourselves, to scamper away, to flee, — that is good for the king's Musketeers!"

Porthos and Aramis trembled with rage. They could

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willingly have strangled M. de Tréville, if, at the bottom of all this, they had not felt it was the great love he bore them which made him speak thus. They stamped upon the carpet with their feet; they bit their lips till the blood came, and grasped the hilts of their swords with all their might. All without had heard, as we have said, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis called, and had guessed, from M. de Tréville's tone of voice that he was very angry about something. Ten curious heads were glued to the tapestry, and became pale with fury; for their ears, closely applied to the door, did not lose a syllable of what he said, while their mouths repeated, as he went on, the insulting expressions of the captain to all the people in the antechamber. In an instant, from the door of the cabinet to the street-gate, the whole hôtel was boiling.

"Ah! the king's Musketeers are arrested by the Guards of the cardinal, are they?" continued M. de Tréville, as furious at heart as his soldiers, but emphasizing his words, and plunging them, one by one, so to say, like so many blows of a stiletto, into the bosoms of his auditors. "What! six of his Eminence's Guards arrest six of his Majesty's Musketeers! *Morbleu!* my part is taken! I will go straight to the Louvre; I will give in my resignation as captain of the king's Musketeers to take a lieutenancy in the cardinal's Guards, and if he refuses me, *morbleu*, I will turn abbé."

At these words, the murmur without became an explosion; nothing was to be heard but oaths and blasphemies. The *morbleus*, the *sang Dieus*, the *morts de touts les diables*, crossed one another in the air. D'Artagnan looked for some tapestry behind which he might hide himself, and felt an immense inclination to crawl under the table.

"Well, my Captain," said Porthos, quite beside himself, "the truth is, that we were six against six. But we

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were not captured by fair means; and before we had time to draw our swords, two of our party were dead, and Athos, grievously wounded, was very little better. For you know Athos. Well, Captain, he endeavored twice to get up, and fell again twice. And we did not surrender, — no! they dragged us away by force. On the way we escaped. As for Athos, they believed him to be dead, and left him very quietly on the field of battle, not thinking it worth the trouble to carry him away. That's the whole history. What the devil, Captain, one cannot win all one's battles! The great Pompey lost that of Pharsalia; and Francis the First, who was, as I have heard say, as good as other folks, nevertheless lost the battle of Pavia."

"And I have the honor of assuring you that I killed one of them with his own sword," said Aramis; "for mine was broken at the first parry. Killed him, or poniarded him, sir, as is most agreeable to you."

"I did not know that," replied M. de Tréville, in a somewhat softened tone. "The cardinal exaggerated, as I perceive."

"But pray, sir," continued Aramis, who, seeing his captain become appeased, ventured to risk a prayer, — "pray, sir, do not say that Athos is wounded. He would be in despair if that should come to the ears of the king; and as the wound is very serious, seeing that after crossing the shoulder it penetrates into the chest, it is to be feared — "

At this instant the tapestry was raised, and a noble and handsome head, but frightfully pale, appeared under the fringe.

"Athos!" cried the two musketeers.

"Athos!" repeated M. de Tréville himself.

"You have sent for me, sir," said Athos to M. de Tréville, in a feeble yet perfectly calm voice, "you have sent

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for me, as my comrades inform me, and I have hastened to receive your orders. I am here; what do you want with me?"

And at these words the musketeer, in irreproachable costume, belted as usual, with a tolerably firm step, entered the cabinet. M. de Tréville, moved to the bottom of his heart by this proof of courage, sprang towards him.

"I was about to say to these gentlemen," added he, "that I forbid my Musketeers to expose their lives needlessly; for brave men are very dear to the king, and the king knows that his Musketeers are the bravest fellows on earth. Your hand, Athos!"

And without waiting for the answer of the new-comer to this proof of affection, M. de Tréville seized his right hand, and pressed it with all his might, without perceiving that Athos, whatever might be his self-command, allowed a slight murmur of pain to escape him, and if possible, grew paler than he was before.

The door had remained open, so strong was the excitement produced by the arrival of Athos, whose wound, though kept as a secret, was known to all. A burst of satisfaction hailed the last words of the captain; and two or three heads, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, appeared through the openings of the tapestry. M. de Tréville was about to reprehend this breach of the rules of etiquette, when he felt the hand of Athos stiffen within his, and upon turning his eyes towards him, perceived he was about to faint. At the same instant Athos, who had rallied all his energies to contend against pain, at length overcome by it, fell upon the floor as if he were dead.

"A surgeon!" cried M. de Tréville, "mine! the king's! the best! A surgeon! or, s'blood, my brave Athos will die!"

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At the cries of M. de Tréville, the whole assemblage rushed into the cabinet, he not thinking to shut the door against any one, and all crowded round the wounded man. But all this eager attention might have been useless, if the doctor so loudly called for had not chanced to be in the hôtel. He pushed through the crowd, approached Athos, still insensible, and as all this noise and commotion inconvenienced him greatly, he required, as the first and most urgent thing, that the musketeer should be carried into an adjoining chamber. Immediately M. de Tréville opened the door, and pointed the way to Porthos and Aramis, who bore their comrade in their arms. Behind this group walked the surgeon; and behind the surgeon the door closed.

The cabinet of M. de Tréville, generally held so sacred, became in an instant the annex of the antechamber. Every one spoke, harangued, and vociferated, swearing, cursing, and consigning the cardinal and his Guards to all the devils.

An instant after, Porthos and Aramis re-entered, the surgeon and M. de Tréville alone remaining with the wounded.

At length M. de Tréville himself returned. The injured man had recovered his senses. The surgeon declared that the situation of the musketeer had nothing in it to render his friends uneasy, his weakness having been purely and simply caused by loss of blood.

Then M. de Tréville made a sign with his hand, and all retired except D'Artagnan, who did not forget that he had an audience, and with the tenacity of a Gascon remained in his place.

When all had gone out, and the door was closed, M. de Tréville, on turning round, found himself alone with the young man. The event which had occurred had in some,

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degree broken the thread of his ideas. He inquired what was the will of his persevering visitor. D'Artagnan then repeated his name, and in an instant recovering all his remembrances of the present and the past, M. de Tréville grasped the situation.

"Pardon me," said he, smiling, — "pardon me, my dear compatriot, but I had wholly forgotten you. But what help is there for it! A captain is nothing but a father of a family, charged with even a greater responsibility than the father of an ordinary family. Soldiers are big children; but as I maintain that the orders of the king, and more particularly the orders of the cardinal, should be executed — "

D'Artagnan could not restrain a smile. By this smile M. de Tréville judged that he had not to deal with a fool, and changing the conversation, came straight to the point.

"I respected your father very much," said he. "What can I do for the son? Tell me quickly; my time is not my own."

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "on quitting Tarbes and coming hither, it was my intention to request of you, in remembrance of the friendship which you have not forgotten, the uniform of a musketeer; but after all that I have seen during the last two hours, I comprehend that such a favor is enormous, and tremble lest I should not merit it."

"It is indeed a favor, young man," replied M. de Tréville, "but it may not be so far beyond your hopes as you believe, or rather as you appear to believe. But his Majesty's decision is always necessary; and I inform you with regret that no one becomes a musketeer without the preliminary ordeal of several campaigns, certain brilliant actions, or a service of two years in some other regiment less favored than ours."

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D'Artagnan bowed without replying, feeling his desire to don the musketeer's uniform vastly increased by the great difficulties which preceded the attainment of it.

"But," continued M. de Tréville, fixing upon his compatriot a look so piercing that it might be said he wished to read the thoughts of his heart, — "but on account of my old companion, your father, as I have said, I will do something for you, young man. Our recruits from Béarn are not generally very rich, and I have no reason to think matters have much changed in this respect since I left the province. I dare say you have not brought too large a stock of money with you?"

D'Artagnan drew himself up with a proud air which plainly said, "I ask alms of no man."

"Oh, that's all very well, young man," continued M. de Tréville, "that's all very well. I know these airs; I myself came to Paris with four crowns in my purse, and would have fought with any one who dared to tell me I was not in a condition to purchase the Louvre."

D'Artagnan's bearing became still more imposing. Thanks to the sale of his horse, he commenced his career with four crowns more than M. de Tréville possessed at the commencement of his.

"You ought, I say, then, to husband the means you have, however large the sum may be; but you ought also to endeavor to perfect yourself in the exercises becoming a gentleman. I will write a letter to-day to the Director of the Royal Academy, and to-morrow he will admit you without any expense to yourself. Do not refuse this little service. Our best born and richest gentlemen sometimes solicit it, without being able to obtain it. You will learn horsemanship, swordsmanship in all its branches, and dancing. You will make some desirable acquaintances; and from time to time you can call upon me, to tell me

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how you are getting on, and to say whether I can be of further service to you."

D'Artagnan, stranger as he was to all the manners of a court, could not but perceive a little coldness in this reception.

"Alas, sir," said he, "I cannot but perceive how sadly I miss the letter of introduction which my father gave me to present to you."

"I certainly am surprised," replied M. de Tréville, "that you should undertake so long a journey without that necessary passport, the sole resource of us poor Béarnese."

"I had one, sir, and, thank God, such as I could wish," cried D'Artagnan; "but it was perfidiously stolen from me."

He then related the adventure of Meung, described the unknown gentleman with the greatest minuteness, and all with a warmth and truthfulness that delighted M. de Tréville.

"This is all very strange," said M. de Tréville, after meditating a minute; "you mentioned my name, then, aloud?"

"Yes, sir, I certainly committed that imprudence; but why should I have done otherwise? A name like yours must be as a buckler to me on my way. Judge if I should not put myself under its protection."

Flattery was at that period very current, and M. de Tréville loved incense as well as a king, or even a cardinal. He could not refrain from a smile of visible satisfaction; but this smile soon disappeared, and returning to the adventure of Meung, "Tell me," continued he, "had not this gentleman a slight scar on his cheek?"

"Yes, such a one as would be made by the grazing of a ball."

"Was he not a fine-looking man?"

"Yes."

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"Of lofty stature?"

"Yes."

"Of pale complexion and brown hair?"

"Yes, yes, that is he; how is it, sir, that you are so quainted with this man? If ever I find him again,—and I will find him, I swear, were it in hell!"

"He was waiting for a woman," continued Tréville.

"He departed immediately after having conversed for a minute with her whom he awaited."

"You know not the subject of their conversation?"

"He gave her a box, told her that that box contained her instructions, and desired her not to open it except in London."

"Was this woman English?"

"He called her Milady."

"It is he; it must be he!" murmured Tréville. "I believed him still at Brussels."

"Oh, sir, if you know who this man is," cried D'Artagnan, "tell me who he is, and whence he is. I will then release you from all your promises,—even that of procuring my admission into the Musketeers; for before everything, I wish to avenge myself."

"Beware, young man!" cried Tréville. "If you see him coming on one side of the street, pass by on the other. Do not cast yourself against such a rock; he would break you like glass."

"That will not prevent me," replied D'Artagnan, "if ever I find him."

"In the mean time," said Tréville, "seek him not,—if I have a right to advise you."

All at once the captain stopped, as if struck by a sudden suspicion. This great hatred which the young traveller manifested so loudly for this man, who—a rather improbable thing—had stolen his father's letter from

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him, — was there not some perfidy concealed under this hatred? Might not this young man be sent by his Eminence? Might he not have come for the purpose of laying a snare for him? This pretended D'Artagnan, — was he not an emissary of the cardinal, whom he sought to introduce into Tréville's house, to place near him, to win his confidence, and afterwards to ruin him as had been done in a thousand other instances? He fixed his eyes upon D'Artagnan even more earnestly than before. He was moderately re-assured, however, by the aspect of that countenance, full of astute intelligence and affected humility. "I know he is a Gascon," reflected he, "but he may be one for the cardinal as well as for me. Let us try him."

"My friend," said he, slowly, "I wish, as the son of an ancient friend, — for I consider this story of the lost letter perfectly true, — I wish, I say, in order to repair the coldness you may have remarked in my reception of you, to discover to you the secrets of our policy. The king and the cardinal are the best of friends; their apparent bickerings are only feints to deceive fools. I am not willing that a compatriot, a handsome cavalier, a brave youth, quite fit to make his way, should become the dupe of all these artifices, and fall into the snare, after the example of so many others who have been ruined by it. Be assured that I am devoted to both these all-powerful masters, and that my earnest endeavors have no other aim than the service of the king, and also the cardinal, — one of the most illustrious geniuses that France has ever produced.

"Now, young man, regulate your conduct accordingly; and if you entertain, whether from your family, your relations, or even from your instincts, any of these enmities which we see constantly breaking out against the cardinal,

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bid me adieu, and let us separate. I will aid you in many ways, but without attaching you to my person. I hope that my frankness at least will make you my friend; for you are the only young man to whom I have hitherto spoken as I have done to you."

Tréville said to himself: "If the cardinal has set this young fox upon me, he will certainly not have failed — he, who knows how bitterly I execrate him — to tell his spy that the best means of making his court to me is to rail at him. Therefore in spite of all my protestations, if it be as I suspect, my cunning gossip will assure me that he holds his Eminence in horror."

It, however, proved otherwise. D'Artagnan answered, with the greatest simplicity: "I came to Paris with exactly such intentions. My father advised me to stoop to nobody but the king, the cardinal, and yourself, — whom he considered the first three personages in France."

D'Artagnan added M. de Tréville to the others, as may be perceived; but he thought this addition would do no harm.

"I have the greatest veneration for the cardinal," continued he, "and the most profound respect for his actions. So much the better for me, sir, if you speak to me, as you say, with frankness, — for then you will do me the honor to esteem the resemblance of our opinions; but if you have entertained any doubt, as naturally you may, I feel that I am ruining myself by speaking the truth. But I still trust you will not esteem me the less for it, and that is my object beyond all others."

M. de Tréville was surprised to the greatest degree. So much penetration, so much frankness, created admiration, but did not entirely remove his suspicions. The more this young man was superior to others, the more he was to be dreaded if he meant to deceive him. Nevertheless,

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he pressed D'Artagnan's hand, and said to him: "You are an honest youth; but at the present moment I can only do for you that which I just now offered. My hôtel will be always open to you. Hereafter, being able to ask for me at all hours, and consequently to take advantage of all opportunities, you will probably obtain that which you desire."

"That is to say," replied D'Artagnan, "that you will wait till I have proved myself worthy of it. Well, be assured," added he, with the familiarity of a Gascon, "you shall not wait long." And he bowed in order to retire, and as if he considered the future in his own hands.

"But wait a minute," said M. de Tréville, stopping him. "I promised you a letter for the Director of the Academy. Are you too proud to accept it, young gentleman?"

"No, sir," said D'Artagnan; "and I will answer for it that this one shall not fare like the other. I will guard it so carefully that I will be sworn it shall arrive at its address, and woe be to him who shall attempt to take it from me!"

M. de Tréville smiled at this flourish; and leaving his young compatriot in the embrasure of the window, where they had talked together, he seated himself at a table in order to write the promised letter of recommendation. While he was doing this, D'Artagnan, having no better employment, amused himself with beating a march upon the window, and with looking at the musketeers, who went away, one after another, following them with his eyes till they disappeared at the turning of the street.

M. de Tréville, after having written the letter, sealed it, and rising, approached the young man in order to give it to him. But at the very moment when D'Ar-

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tagnan stretched out his hand to receive it, M. de Tréville was highly astonished to see his *protégé* make a sudden spring, become crimson with passion, and rush from the cabinet, crying, "S' blood, he shall not escape me this time!"

"And who?" asked M. de Tréville.

"He, my thief!" replied D'Artagnan. "Ah, the traitor!" and he disappeared.

"The devil take the madman!" murmured M. de Tréville, "unless," added he, "this is a cunning mode of escaping, seeing that he has failed in his purpose!"

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CHAPTER IV.

THE SHOULDER OF ATHOS, THE BALDRIC OF PORTHOS, AND THE HANDKERCHIEF OF ARAMIS.

D'Artagnan, in a state of fury, crossed the ante-chamber at three bounds, and was darting towards the stairs, which he reckoned upon descending four at a time, when, in his heedless course, he ran head foremost against a musketeer who was coming out of one of M. de Tréville's private rooms, and striking his shoulder violently, made him utter a cry, or rather a howl.

"Excuse me," said D'Artagnan, endeavoring to resume his course, — "excuse me, but I am in a hurry."

Scarcely had he descended the first stair, when a hand of iron seized him by the belt and stopped him.

"You are in a hurry?" said the musketeer, as pale as a sheet. "Under that pretence you run against me! You say, 'Excuse me,' and you believe that that is sufficient? Not at all, my young man. Do you fancy that because you have heard M. de Tréville speak to us a little cavalierly to-day that other people are to treat us as he speaks to us? Undeceive yourself, comrade, you are not M. de Tréville."

"My faith!" replied D'Artagnan, recognizing Athos, who, after the dressing performed by the doctor, was returning to his own apartment, — "my faith! I did not do it intentionally, and not doing it intentionally, I said, 'Excuse me.' It appears to me that is quite enough. I repeat to you, however, and this time on my word of

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honor, — I think, perhaps, too often, — that I am in haste, great haste. Leave your hold then, I beg of you, and let me go where my business calls me."

"Monsieur," said Athos, letting him go, "you are not polite; it is easy to perceive that you come from a distance."

D'Artagnan had already strode down three or four stairs, but at Athos's last remark he stopped short.

"*Morbleu*, Monsieur!" said he, "however far I may come, it is not you who can give me a lesson in good manners, I warn you."

"Perhaps!" said Athos.

"Ah! if I were not in such haste, and if I were not running after some one," said D'Artagnan.

"Monsieur Man-in-a-hurry, you can find me without running, — *me*, you understand?"

"And where, so please you?"

"Near the Carmes-Deschaux."

"At what hour?"

"About noon."

"About noon? That will do; I will be there."

"Endeavor not to make me wait, for at a quarter past twelve I will cut off your ears as you run."

"Good!" cried D'Artagnan, "I will be there ten minutes before twelve." And he set off running as if the Devil possessed him, hoping that he might yet find the unknown, whose slow pace could not have carried him far.

But at the street-gate Porthos was talking with the soldier on guard. Between the two talkers there was just room for a man to pass. D'Artagnan thought it would suffice for him, and he sprang forward like a dart between them. But D'Artagnan had reckoned without the wind. As he was about to pass, the wind blew out Porthos's long cloak, and D'Artagnan rushed straight into the middle of

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it. Without doubt, Porthos had reasons for not abandoning this part of his vestments, for instead of quitting his hold of the flap in his hand, he pulled it towards him, so that D'Artagnan rolled himself up in the velvet by a movement of rotation explained by the persistency of Porthos.

D'Artagnan, hearing the musketeer swear, wished to escape from the cloak, which blinded him, and sought to find his way from under the folds of it. He was particularly anxious to avoid marring the freshness of the magnificent baldric we are acquainted with; but on timidly opening his eyes, he found himself with his nose fixed between the two shoulders of Porthos, — that is to say, exactly upon the baldric.

Alas, like most things in this world which have nothing in their favor but appearances, the baldric was glittering with gold in the front, but was nothing but simple buff behind. Vain-glorious as he was, Porthos could not afford to have a baldric wholly of gold, but had at least the half. One could comprehend the necessity of the cold, and the urgency of the cloak.

"Bless me," cried Porthos, making strong efforts to disembarrass himself of D'Artagnan, who was wriggling about his back; "you must be mad to run against people in this manner."

"Excuse me," said D'Artagnan, reappearing under the shoulder of the giant, "but I am in such haste — I was running after some one, and —"

"And do you always forget your eyes when you run?" asked Porthos.

"No," replied D'Artagnan, piqued, — "no, and thanks to my eyes, I can see what other people cannot see."

Whether Porthos understood him or did not understand him, giving way to his anger, "Monsieur," said he, "you

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stand a chance of getting chastised if you rub musketeers in this fashion."

"Chastised, Monsieur!" said D'Artagnan, "the expression is strong."

"It is one that becomes a man accustomed to look his enemies in the face."

"Ah, *pardieu!* I know full well that you don't turn your back to yours."

And the young man, delighted with his joke, went away laughing loudly.

Porthos foamed with rage, and made a movement to rush after D'Artagnan.

"Presently, presently," cried the latter, "when you have n't your cloak on."

"At one o'clock then, behind the Luxembourg."

"Very well, at one o'clock, then," replied D'Artagnan, turning the angle of the street.

But neither in the street he had passed through, nor in the one which his eager glance pervaded, could he see any one; however slowly the unknown had walked, he was gone on his way, or perhaps had entered some house. D'Artagnan inquired of every one he met with, went down to the ferry, came up again by the Rue de Seine and the Red Cross; but nothing, absolutely nothing! This chase was, however, advantageous to him in one sense, for in proportion as the perspiration broke from his forehead, his heart began to cool.

He began to reflect upon the events that had passed; they were numerous and inauspicious. It was scarcely eleven o'clock in the morning, and yet this morning had already brought him into disgrace with M. de Tréville, who could not fail to think the manner in which D'Artagnan had left him a little cavalier.

Besides this, he had drawn upon himself two good duels

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with two men, each capable of killing three D'Artagnans, — with two musketeers, in short, with two of those beings whom he esteemed so greatly that he placed them in his mind and heart above all other men.

The outlook was sad. Sure of being killed by Athos, it may easily be understood that the young man was not very uneasy about Porthos. As hope, however, is the last thing extinguished in the heart of man, he finished by hoping that he might survive, even though with terrible wounds, in both these duels; and in case of surviving, he made the following reprehensions upon his own conduct:

"What a madcap I was, and what a stupid fellow I am! That brave and unfortunate Athos was wounded on that very shoulder against which I must run head foremost, like a ram. The only thing that astonishes me is that he did not strike me dead at once. He had good cause to do so; the pain I gave him must have been atrocious. As to Porthos, — oh, as to Porthos, faith, that's a droll affair!"

And in spite of himself, the young man began to laugh aloud, looking round carefully, however, to see if his solitary laugh, without a cause in the eyes of passers-by, offended no one.

"As to Porthos, that is certainly droll; but I am not the less a giddy fool. Are people to be run against without warning? No; and have I any right to go and peep under their cloaks to see what is not there? He would have pardoned me, he would certainly have pardoned me, if I had not said anything to him about that cursed baldric, — in ambiguous words, it is true, but rather drolly ambiguous. Ah, cursed Gascon that I am, I get from one hobble into another. Friend D'Artagnan," continued he, speaking to himself with all the amenity that he thought due to himself, "if you escape, of which there is

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not much chance, I would advise you to practise perfect politeness for the future. You must henceforth be admired and quoted as a model of it. To be obliging and polite does not necessarily make a man a coward. Look at Aramis now; Aramis is mildness and grace personified. Well, did anybody ever dream of calling Aramis a coward? No, certainly not, and from this moment I will endeavor to model myself after him. Ah, here he is!"

D'Artagnan, walking and soliloquizing, had arrived within a few steps of the Hôtel Aiguillon, and in front of that hôtel perceived Aramis, chatting gayly with three gentlemen of the king's Guards. On his part Aramis perceived D'Artagnan; but as he had not forgotten that it was in presence of this young man that M. de Tréville had been so angry in the morning, and that a witness of the rebuke the Musketeers had received was not likely to be at all agreeable, he pretended not to see him. D'Artagnan, on the contrary, quite full of his plans of conciliation and courtesy, approached the young men with a profound bow, accompanied by a most gracious smile. Aramis bowed his head slightly, but did not smile. All four, besides, immediately broke off their conversation.

D'Artagnan was not so dull as not to perceive that he was one too many; but he was not sufficiently broken into the fashions of the gay world to know how to extricate himself gallantly from a false position, like that of a man who begins to mingle with people he is scarcely acquainted with, and in a conversation that does not concern him. He was seeking in his mind, then, for the least awkward means of retreat, when he remarked that Aramis had let his handkerchief fall, and by mistake, no doubt, had placed his foot upon it. This appeared a favorable opportunity to repair his intrusion. He stooped, and with the most gracious air he could assume, drew the hand-

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kerchief from under the foot of the musketeer in spite of the efforts the latter made to detain it, and holding it out to him, said, "I believe, Monsieur, that this is a handkerchief you would be sorry to lose?"

The handkerchief was indeed richly embroidered, and had a coronet and arms at one of its corners. Aramis blushed excessively, and snatched rather than took the handkerchief from the hands of the Gascon.

"Ah, ah!" cried one of the Guards, "will you persist in saying, most discreet Aramis, that you are not on good terms with Madame de Bois-Tracy, when that gracious lady has the kindness to lend you one of her handkerchiefs?"

Aramis darted at D'Artagnan one of those looks which inform a man that he has acquired a mortal enemy. Then, resuming his mild air, "You are deceived, gentlemen," said he, "this handkerchief is not mine, and I cannot fancy why Monsieur has taken it into his head to offer it to me rather than to one of you; and as a proof of what I say, here is mine in my pocket."

So saying, he pulled out his own handkerchief, likewise a very elegant handkerchief, and of fine cambric, — though cambric was dear at the period, — but a handkerchief without embroidery and without arms, only ornamented with a single cipher, that of its proprietor.

This time D'Artagnan was not hasty. He perceived his mistake; but the friends of Aramis were not at all convinced by his denial, and one of them addressed the young musketeer with affected seriousness. "If it were as you pretend it is," said he, "I should be forced, my dear Aramis, to reclaim it myself; for, as you very well know, Bois-Tracy is an intimate friend of mine, and I cannot allow the property of his wife to be sported as a trophy."

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"You make the demand badly," replied Aramis; "and while acknowledging the justice of your reclamation, I refuse it on account of the form."

"The fact is," hazarded D'Artagnan, timidly, "I did not see the handkerchief fall from the pocket of M. Aramis. He had his foot upon it, that is all; and I thought from his having his foot upon it the handkerchief was his."

"And you were deceived, my dear sir," replied Aramis, coldly, very little sensible to the reparation. Then turning towards that one of the guards who had declared himself the friend of Bois-Tracy, "Besides," continued he, "I have reflected, my dear intimate of Bois-Tracy, that I am not less tenderly his friend than you can possibly be; so that decidedly this handkerchief is as likely to have fallen from your pocket as mine."

"No, upon my honor!" cried his Majesty's guardsman.

"You are about to swear upon your honor and I upon my word, and then it will be pretty evident that one of us will have lied. Now, here, Montaran, we will do better than that, let each take a half."

"Of the handkerchief?"

"Yes."

"Perfectly just," cried the other two guardsmen, — "the judgment of King Solomon! Aramis, you certainly are full of wisdom!"

The young men burst into a laugh, and, as may be supposed, the affair had no other sequel. In a moment or two the conversation ceased, and the three guardsmen and the musketeer, after having cordially shaken hands, separated, the guardsmen going one way, and Aramis another.

"Now is my time to make my peace with this gallant man," said D'Artagnan to himself, having stood on one

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side during the whole of the latter part of the conversation; and with this good feeling drawing near to Aramis, who was departing without paying any attention to him, "Monsieur," said he, "you will excuse me, I hope."

"Ah, Monsieur," interrupted Aramis, "permit me to observe to you, that you have not acted in this affair as a gallant man ought."

"What, Monsieur!" cried D'Artagnan, "and do you suppose—"

"I suppose, Monsieur, that you are not a fool, and that you knew very well, although coming from Gascony, that people do not tread upon handkerchiefs without a reason. What the devil! Paris is not paved with cambric!"

"Monsieur, you act wrongly in endeavoring to mortify me," said D'Artagnan, in whom the natural quarrelsome spirit began to speak more loudly than his pacific resolutions. "I am from Gascony, it is true; and since you know it, there is no occasion to tell you that Gascons are not very patient, so that when they have begged to be excused once, were it even for a folly, they are convinced that they have done already at least as much again as they ought to have done."

"Monsieur, what I say to you about the matter," said Aramis, "is not for the sake of seeking a quarrel. Thank God, I am not a bravo! And being a musketeer but for a time, I only fight when I am forced to do so, and always with great repugnance; but this time the affair is serious, for here is a lady compromised by you."

"By *us*, you mean," cried D'Artagnan.

"Why did you so maladroitly restore me the handkerchief?"

"Why did you so awkwardly let it fall?"

"I have said, Monsieur, and I repeat, that the handkerchief did not fall from my pocket."

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"And thereby you have lied twice, Monsieur, for I saw it fall."

"Ah, you take it with that tone, do you, Master Gascon? Well, I will teach you how to behave yourself."

"And I will send you back to your mass-book, Master Abbé. Draw, if you please, and instantly —"

"Not so, if you please, my good friend, — not here, at least. Do you not perceive that we are opposite the Hôtel d'Aiguillon, which is full of the cardinal's creatures? How do I know that it is not his Eminence who has honored you with the commission to procure him my head? Now, I entertain a ridiculous partiality for my head, it seems to suit my shoulders so correctly. I wish to kill you, be at rest as to that, but to kill you quietly in a snug, remote place, where you will not be able to boast of your death to anybody."

"I agree, Monsieur; but do not be too confident. Take your handkerchief; whether it belongs to you or another, you may perhaps stand in need of it."

"Monsieur is a Gascon?" asked Aramis.

"Yes. Monsieur does not postpone an interview through prudence?"

"Prudence, Monsieur, is a virtue sufficiently useless to musketeers, I know, but indispensable to churchmen; and as I am only a musketeer provisionally, I hold it good to be prudent. At two o'clock, I shall have the honor of expecting you at the hôtel of M. de Tréville. There I will indicate to you the best place and time."

The two young men bowed and separated, Aramis ascending the street which led to the Luxembourg, while D'Artagnan, perceiving the appointed hour was approaching, took the road to the Carmes-Deschaux, saying to himself, "Decidedly I can't draw back; but at least, if I am killed, I shall be killed by a musketeer."

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CHAPTER V.

THE KING'S MUSKETEERS AND THE CARDINAL'S GUARDS.

D'ARTAGNAN was acquainted with nobody in Paris. He went therefore to his appointment with Athos without a second, determined to be satisfied with those his adversary should choose. Besides, his intention was formed to make the brave musketeer all suitable apologies, but without meanness or weakness, fearing that might result from this duel which generally results from an affair of the kind, when a young and vigorous man fights with an adversary who is wounded and weakened, — if conquered, he doubles the triumph of his antagonist; if a conqueror, he is accused of foul play and want of courage.

Now, we must have badly painted the character of our adventure-seeker, or our readers must have already perceived that D'Artagnan was not an ordinary man; therefore, while repeating to himself that his death was inevitable, he did not make up his mind to die quietly, as one less courageous and less restrained might have done in his place. He reflected upon the different characters of the men he had to fight with, and began to view his situation more clearly. He hoped, by means of loyal excuses, to make a friend of Athos, whose lordly air and austere bearing pleased him much. He flattered himself he should be able to frighten Porthos with the adventure of the baldric, which he might, if not killed upon the spot, relate to everybody, — a recital which, well managed, would cover Porthos with ridicule. As to the astute

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Aramis, he did not entertain much dread of him; and supposing he should be able to get so far, he determined to despatch him in good style, or at least by hitting him in the face, as Cæsar recommended his soldiers to do to those of Pompey, damage forever the beauty of which he was so proud.

In addition to this, D'Artagnan possessed that invincible stock of resolution which the counsels of his father had implanted in his heart: "Endure nothing from any one but the king, the cardinal, and M. de Tréville." He flew, then, rather than walked, towards the convent of the Carmes déchaussés, or rather Deschaux, as it was called at that period, a sort of building without a window, surrounded by barren fields, — an accessory to the Pré-aux-Clercs, and which was generally employed as the place for the rencontres of men who had no time to lose.

When D'Artagnan arrived in sight of the bare spot of ground which extended along the foot of the monastery, Athos had been waiting about five minutes, and twelve o'clock was striking. He was, then, as punctual as the Samaritan woman, and the most rigorous casuist with regard to duels could have nothing to say.

Athos, who still suffered grievously from his wound, though it had been dressed anew by M. de Tréville's surgeon, was seated on a post and waiting for his adversary with that placid countenance and that noble air which never forsook him. At sight of D'Artagnan, he arose and came politely a few steps to meet him. The latter, on his side, saluted his adversary with hat in hand, his feather even touching the ground.

"Monsieur," said Athos, "I have engaged two of my friends as seconds; but these two friends are not yet come, at which I am astonished, as it is not at all their custom."

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"I have no seconds on my part, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan; "for having only arrived yesterday in Paris, I as yet know no one but M. de Tréville, to whom I was recommended by my father, who has the honor to be, in some degree, one of his friends."

Athos reflected for an instant. "You know no one but M. de Tréville?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur, I know only him."

"Well, but then," continued Athos, speaking half to himself, — "well, but then, if I kill you, I shall have the air of a boy-slayer."

"Not too much so," replied D'Artagnan, with a bow that was not deficient in dignity, — "not too much so, since you do me the honor to draw a sword with me while suffering from a wound which is very inconvenient."

"Very inconvenient, upon my word; and you hurt me devilishly, I can tell you. But I will take the left hand, — it is my custom in such circumstances. Do not fancy that I do you a favor; I use either hand easily. And it will be even a disadvantage to you; a left-handed man is very troublesome to people who are not prepared for it. I regret I did not inform you sooner of this circumstance."

"You have truly, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, bowing again, "a courtesy, for which, I assure you, I am very grateful."

"You confuse me," replied Athos, with his gentlemanly air; "let us talk of something else, if you please. Ah, s'blood, how you have hurt me! my shoulder quite burns."

"If you would permit me —" said D'Artagnan, with timidity.

"What, Monsieur?"

"I have a miraculous balsam for wounds, — a balsam

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given to me by my mother, and of which I have made a trial upon myself."

"Well?"

"Well, I am sure that in less than three days this balsam would cure you; and at the end of three days, when you would be cured, — well, sir, it would still do me a great honor to be your man."

D'Artagnan spoke these words with a simplicity that did honor to his courtesy, without throwing the least doubt upon his courage.

"*Pardieu*, Monsieur!" said Athos, "that 's a proposition that pleases me; not that I accept it, but a league off it savors of the gentleman. Thus spoke and acted the gallant knights of the time of Charlemagne, in whom every cavalier ought to seek his model. Unfortunately, we do not live in the times of the great emperor, we live in the times of the cardinal; and three days hence, however well the secret might be guarded, it would be known, I say, that we were to fight, and our combat would be prevented. I think these fellows will never come."

"If you are in haste, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, with the same simplicity with which a moment before he had proposed to him to put off the duel for three days, — "if you are in haste, and if it be your will to despatch me at once, do not inconvenience yourself, I pray you."

"There is another word which pleases me," cried Athos, with a gracious nod to D'Artagnan. "That did not come from a man without brains, and certainly not from a man without a heart. Monsieur, I love men of your kidney; and I foresee plainly that if we don't kill each other, I shall hereafter have much pleasure in your conversation. We will wait for these gentlemen, so please you; I have plenty of time, and it will be more correct. Ah, here is one of them, I believe."

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In fact, at the end of the Rue Vaugirard the gigantic Porthos appeared.

"What!" cried D'Artagnan, "is your first witness M. Porthos?"

"Yes. That disturbs you?"

"By no means."

"And here is the second."

D'Artagnan turned in the direction pointed to by Athos, and perceived Aramis.

"What!" cried he, in an accent of greater astonishment than before, "your second witness is M. Aramis?"

"Doubtless! Are you not aware that we are never seen one without the others, and that we are called among the Musketeers and the Guards, at court and in the city, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, or the Three Inseparables? And yet, as you come from Dax or Pau —"

"From Tarbes," said D'Artagnan.

"It is probable you are ignorant of this little fact," said Athos.

"My faith!" replied D'Artagnan, "you are well named, gentlemen; and my adventure, if it should make any noise, will prove at least that your union is not founded upon contrasts."

In the mean time Porthos had come up, waved his hand to Athos, and then turning towards D'Artagnan, stood quite astonished.

Let us say in passing that he had changed his baldric, and relinquished his cloak.

"Ah, ah!" said he, "what does this mean?"

"This is the gentleman I am going to fight with," said Athos, pointing to D'Artagnan with his hand, and saluting him with the same gesture.

"Why, it is with him I am also going to fight," said Porthos.

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"But not before one o'clock," replied D'Artagnan.

"And I also am to fight with this gentleman," said Aramis, coming in his turn on to the place.

"But not till two o'clock," said D'Artagnan, with the same calmness.

"But what are you going to fight about, Athos?" asked Aramis.

"Faith! I don't very well know. He hurt my shoulder. And you, Porthos?"

"Faith! I am going to fight, — because I am going to fight," answered Porthos, reddening.

Athos, whose keen eye lost nothing, perceived a faintly sly smile pass over the lips of the young Gascon, as he replied, "We had a short discussion upon dress."

"And you, Aramis?" asked Athos.

"Oh, ours is a theological quarrel," replied Aramis, making a sign to D'Artagnan to keep secret the cause of their duel.

Athos saw a second smile on the lips of D'Artagnan.

"Indeed?" said Athos.

"Yes; a passage of Saint Augustine, upon which we could not agree," said the Gascon.

"Decidedly, this is a clever fellow," murmured Athos.

"And now you are all assembled, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "permit me to offer you my apologies."

At this word *apologies*, a cloud passed over the brow of Athos, a haughty smile curled the lip of Porthos, and a negative sign was the reply of Aramis.

"You do not understand me, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, throwing up his head, the sharp and bold lines of which were at the moment gilded by a bright ray of the sun. "I asked to be excused in case I should not be able to discharge my debt to all three; for M. Athos has the right to kill me first, which must abate your valor in

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your own estimation, M. Porthos, and render yours almost null, M. Aramis. And now, gentlemen, I repeat, excuse me, but on that account only, and — on guard!"

At these words, with the most gallant air possible D'Artagnan drew his sword.

The blood had mounted to the head of D'Artagnan, and at that moment he would have drawn his sword against all the musketeers in the kingdom as willingly as he now did against Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

It was a quarter past midday. The sun was in its zenith, and the spot chosen for the scene of the duel was exposed to its full ardor.

"It is very hot," said Athos, drawing his sword in his turn, "and yet I cannot take off my doublet; for I just now felt my wound begin to bleed again, and I should not like to annoy Monsieur with the sight of blood which he has not drawn from me himself."

"That is true, Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan, "and whether drawn by myself or another, I assure you I shall always view with regret the blood of so brave a gentleman. I will therefore fight in my doublet, like yourself."

"Come, come, enough of such compliments," cried Porthos. "Remember, we are waiting for our turns."

"Speak for yourself when you are inclined to utter such incongruities," interrupted Aramis. "For my part, I think what they say is very well said, and quite worthy of two gentlemen."

"When you please, Monsieur," said Athos, putting himself on guard.

"I waited your orders," said D'Artagnan, crossing swords.

But scarcely had the two rapiers clashed, when a company of the Guards of his Eminence, commanded by M. de Jussac, turned the corner of the convent.

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"The cardinal's Guards! cried Aramis and Porthos at the same time. "Sheathe your swords, gentlemen, sheathe your swords!"

But it was too late. The two combatants had been seen in a position which left no doubt of their intentions.

"Halloo!" cried Jussac, advancing towards them, and making a sign to his men to do so likewise, "halloo, musketeers? Fighting here, are you? And the edicts, what is become of them?"

"You are very generous, gentlemen of the Guards," said Athos, full of rancor, for Jussac was one of the aggressors of the preceding day." If we were to see you fighting, I can assure you that we would make no effort to prevent you. Leave us alone then, and you will enjoy a little amusement without cost to yourselves."

"Gentlemen," said Jussac, "it is with great regret that I pronounce the thing impossible. Duty before everything. Sheathe, then, if you please, and follow us."

"Monsieur," said Aramis, parodying Jussac, "it would afford us great pleasure to obey your polite invitation if it depended upon ourselves; but unfortunately the thing is impossible, — M. de Tréville has forbidden it. Pass on your way, then; it is the best thing to do."

This raillery exasperated Jussac. "We will charge upon you, then," said he, "if you disobey."

"There are five of them," said Athos, half aloud, "and we are but three; we shall be beaten again, and must die on the spot, for, on my part, I declare I will never again appear before the captain as a conquered man."

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis instantly drew near one another, while Jussac drew up his soldiers.

This short interval was sufficient to determine D'Artagnan on the part he was to take. It was one of those events which decide the life of a man; it was a choice

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between the king and the cardinal, — the choice made, it must be persisted in. To fight, that was to disobey the law, that was to risk his head, that was to make at one blow an enemy of a minister more powerful than the king himself. All this the young man perceived, and yet, to his praise we speak it, he did not hesitate a second. Turning towards Athos and his friends, "Gentlemen," said he, "allow me to correct your words, if you please. You said you were but three, but it appears to me we are four."

"But you are not one of us," said Porthos.

"That's true," replied D'Artagnan; "I have not the uniform, but I have the spirit. My heart is that of a musketeer; I feel it, Monsieur, and that impels me on."

"Withdraw, young man," cried Jussac, who doubtless, by his gestures and the expression of his countenance, had guessed D'Artagnan's design. "You may retire; we consent to that. Save your skin; begone quickly."

D'Artagnan did not budge.

"Decidedly you are a brave fellow," said Athos, pressing the young man's hand.

"Come, come, choose your part," replied Jussac.

"Well," said Porthos to Aramis, "we must do something."

"Monsieur is full of generosity," said Athos.

But all three reflected upon the youth of D'Artagnan, and dreaded his inexperience.

"We should only be three, one of whom is wounded, with the addition of a boy," resumed Athos; "and yet it will not be the less said we were four men."

"Yes, but to yield!" said Porthos.

"That *is* difficult," replied Athos.

D'Artagnan comprehended their irresolution.

"Try me, gentlemen," said he, "and I swear to you by my honor that I will not go hence if we are conquered."

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"What is your name, my brave fellow?" said Athos.

"D'Artagnan, Monsieur."

"Well, then, Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan, forward!" cried Athos.

"Come, gentlemen, have you decided?" cried Jussac for the third time.

"It is done, gentlemen," said Athos.

"And what is your choice?" asked Jussac.

"We are about to have the honor of charging you," replied Aramis, lifting his hat with one hand, and drawing his sword with the other.

"Ah! you resist, do you?" cried Jussac.

"S' blood! does that astonish you?"

And the nine combatants rushed upon each other with a fury which however did not exclude a certain degree of method.

Athos fixed upon a certain Cahusac, a favorite of the cardinal's. Porthos had Bicarat, and Aramis found himself opposed to two adversaries. As to D'Artagnan, he found himself assailing Jussac himself.

The heart of the young Gascon beat as if it would burst through his side, — not from fear, God be thanked, he had not the shade of it, but with emulation; he fought like a furious tiger, turning ten times round his adversary, and changing his ground and his guard twenty times. Jussac was, as was then said, a fine blade, and had had much practice; nevertheless, it required all his skill to defend himself against an adversary who, active and energetic, departed every instant from received rules, attacking him on all sides at once, and yet parrying like a man who had the greatest respect for his own epidermis.

This contest at length exhausted Jussac's patience. Furious at being held in check by one whom he had considered a boy, he became warm, and began to make mis-

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takes. D'Artagnan, who though wanting in practice had a sound theory, redoubled his agility. Jussac, anxious to put an end to this, springing forward aimed a terrible thrust at his adversary, but the latter parried it; and while Jussac was recovering himself, glided like a serpent beneath his blade, and passed his sword through his body. Jussac fell like a dead mass.

D'Artagnan then cast an anxious and rapid glance over the field of battle.

Aramis had killed one of his adversaries, but the other pressed him warmly. Nevertheless, Aramis was in a good situation, and able to defend himself.

Bicarat and Porthos had just made counter-hits. Porthos had received a thrust through his arm, and Bicarat one through his thigh. But neither of these two wounds was serious, and they only fought the more earnestly.

Athos, wounded anew by Cahusac, became evidently paler, but did not give way a foot. He only changed his sword hand, and fought with his left hand.

According to the laws of duelling at that period, D'Artagnan was at liberty to assist whom he pleased. While he was endeavoring to find out which of his companions stood in greatest need, he caught a glance from Athos. This glance was of sublime eloquence. Athos would have died rather than appeal for help; but he could look, and with that look ask assistance. D'Artagnan interpreted it; with a terrible bound he sprang to the side of Cahusac, crying, "To me, Monsieur Guardsman; I will slay you!"

Cahusac turned. It was time; for Athos, whose great courage alone supported him, sank upon his knee.

"S' blood!" cried he to D'Artagnan, "do not kill him, young man, I beg of you. I have an old affair to settle with him when I am cured and sound again. Disarm

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him only, — make sure of his sword. That 's it! Very well done!"

This exclamation was drawn from Athos by seeing the sword of Cahusac fly twenty paces from him. D'Artagnan and Cahusac sprang forward at the same instant, the one to recover, the other to obtain, the sword; but D'Artagnan, being the more active, reached it first, and placed his foot upon it.

Cahusac immediately ran to the guardsman whom Aramis had killed, seized his rapier, and returned towards D'Artagnan; but on his way he met Athos, who during this relief which D'Artagnan had procured him had recovered his breath, and who, for fear that D'Artagnan would kill his enemy, wished to resume the fight.

D'Artagnan perceived that it would be disobliging Athos not to leave him alone; and in a few minutes Cahusac fell, with a sword-thrust through his throat.

At the same instant Aramis placed his sword-point on the breast of his fallen enemy, and forced him to ask for mercy.

There only then remained Porthos and Bicarat. Porthos made a thousand flourishes, asking Bicarat what o'clock it could be, and offering him his compliments upon his brother's having just obtained a company in the regiment of Navarre; but, jest as he might, he gained nothing. Bicarat was one of those iron men who never fall dead.

Nevertheless, it was necessary to finish. The watch might come up and take all the combatants, wounded or not, royalists or cardinalists. Athos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan surrounded Bicarat, and required him to surrender. Though alone against all, and with a wound in his thigh, Bicarat wished to hold out; but Jussac, who had risen upon his elbow, cried out to him to yield. Bicarat was a Gascon, as D'Artagnan was; he turned a deaf ear, and

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contented himself with laughing, and between two parries finding time to point to a spot of earth with his sword, "Here," cried he, parodying a verse of the Bible, — "here will Bicarat die; for I only am left, and they seek my life."

"But there are four against you; leave off, I command you."

"Ah, if you command me, that's another thing," said Bicarat. "As you are my commander, it is my duty to obey." And springing backward, he broke his sword across his knee to avoid the necessity of surrendering it, threw the pieces over the convent wall, and crossed his arms, whistling a cardinalist air.

Bravery is always respected, even in an enemy. The musketeers saluted Bicarat with their swords, and returned them to their sheaths. D'Artagnan did the same. Then, assisted by Bicarat, the only one left standing, he bore Jussac, Cahusac, and one of Aramis's adversaries who was only wounded, under the porch of the convent. The fourth, as we have said, was dead. They then rang the bell, and carrying away four swords out of five, they took their road, intoxicated with joy, towards the hôtel of M. de Tréville.

They walked arm in arm, occupying the whole width of the street, and taking in every musketeer they met, so that in the end it became a triumphal march. The heart of D'Artagnan swam in delirium; he marched between Athos and Porthos, pressing them tenderly.

"If I am not yet a musketeer," said he to his new friends, as he passed through the gateway of M. de Tréville's hôtel, "at least I have entered upon my apprenticeship, have n't I?"

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CHAPTER VI.

HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIII.

THIS affair made a great noise. M. de Tréville scolded his Musketeers in public, and congratulated them in private; but as no time was to be lost in gaining the king, M. de Tréville hastened to report himself at the Louvre. It was already too late. The king was closeted with the cardinal, and M. de Tréville was informed that the king was busy, and could not receive him at that moment. In the evening M. de Tréville attended the king's gaming-table. The king was winning; and as he was very avaricious, he was in an excellent humor. Perceiving M. de Tréville at a distance, —

"Come here, Monsieur Captain," said he, — "come here, that I may growl at you. Do you know that his Eminence has been making fresh complaints against your Musketeers, and that with so much emotion, that this evening his Eminence is indisposed? Ah, these Musketeers of yours are very devils, — fellows to be hanged."

"No, sire," replied Tréville, who saw at the first glance how things would go, — "no, sire; on the contrary, they are good creatures, as meek as lambs, and have but one desire, I'll be their warranty. And that is that their swords may never leave their scabbards but in your Majesty's service. But what are they to do? The Guards of Monsieur the Cardinal are forever seeking quarrels with them, and for the honor of the corps even, the poor young men are obliged to defend themselves."

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"Listen to M. de Tréville," said the king; "listen to him! Would not one say he was speaking of a religious community? In truth, my dear Captain, I have a great mind to take away your commission, and give it to Mademoiselle de Chemerault, to whom I promised an abbey. But don't fancy that I am going to take you on your bare word. I am called Louis the Just, M. de Tréville, and by-and-by, by-and-by we will see."

"Ah, sire; it is because I confide in that justice that I shall wait patiently and quietly the good pleasure of your Majesty."

"Wait, then, Monsieur, wait," said the king; "I will not detain you long."

In fact, fortune changed; and as the king began to lose what he had won, he was not sorry to find an excuse for playing Charlemagne, — if we may use a gaming phrase of whose origin we confess our ignorance. The king therefore arose a minute after, and putting the money which lay before him into his pocket, the major part of which arose from his winnings, "La Vieuville," said he, "take my place; I must speak to M. de Tréville on an affair of importance. Ah, I had eighty louis before me; put down the same sum, so that they who have lost may have nothing to complain of. Justice before everything."

Then turning towards M. de Tréville, and walking with him towards the embrasure of a window, "Well, Monsieur," continued he, "you say it is his Eminence's Guards who have sought a quarrel with your Musketeers?"

"Yes, sire, as they always do."

"And how did the thing happen? Let us see, for you know, my dear Captain, a judge must hear both sides."

"Good Lord! in the most simple and natural manner possible. Three of my best soldiers, whom your Majesty

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knows by name, and whose devotedness you have more than once appreciated, and who have, I dare affirm to the king, his service much at heart, — three of my best soldiers, I say, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, had made a party of pleasure with a young fellow from Gascony, whom I had introduced to them the same morning. The party was to take place at St. Germain, I believe, and they had appointed to meet at the Carmes-Deschaux, when they were disturbed by De Jussac, Cahusac, Bicarat, and two other guardsmen, who certainly did not go there in such a numerous company without some ill intention against the edicts."

"Ah, ah! you incline me to think so," said the king. "There is no doubt they went thither to fight themselves."

"I do not accuse them, sire; but I leave your Majesty to judge what five armed men could possibly be going to do in such a deserted place as the neighborhood of the Convent des Carmes."

"Yes, you are right, Tréville, you are right!"

"Then, upon seeing my musketeers they changed their minds, and forgot their private hatred for partisan hatred; for your Majesty cannot be ignorant that the Musketeers, who belong to the king, and to nobody but the king, are the natural enemies of the Guardsmen, who belong to the cardinal."

"Yes, Tréville, yes," said the king, in a melancholy tone; "and it is very sad, believe me, to see thus two parties in France, two heads to royalty. But all this will come to an end, Tréville, will come to an end. You say, then, that the guardsmen sought a quarrel with the musketeers."

"I say that it is probable that things have fallen out so, but I will not swear to it, sire. You know how difficult it is to discover the truth; and unless a man be en-

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dowed with that admirable instinct which causes Louis XIII. to be named the Just —"

"You are right, Tréville; but they were not alone, your musketeers. They had a youth with them?"

"Yes, sire, and one wounded man; so that three of the king's Musketeers — one of whom was wounded — and a youth not only maintained their ground against five of the most terrible of the cardinal's Guardsmen, but absolutely brought four of them to the earth."

"Why, this is a victory!" cried the king, all radiant, "a complete victory!"

"Yes, sire; as complete as that of the Bridge of Cé."

"Four men, one of them wounded, and a youth, say you?"

"One hardly a young man; but who, however, behaved himself so admirably on this occasion that I will take the liberty of recommending him to your Majesty."

"How does he call himself?"

"D'Artagnan, sire; he is the son of one of my oldest friends, — the son of a man who served under the king, your father, of glorious memory, in the civil war."

"And you say that this young man behaved himself well? Tell me how, Tréville, — you know how I delight in accounts of war and fighting."

And Louis XIII. twisted his mustache proudly, placing his hand upon his hip.

"Sire," resumed Tréville, "as I told you, M. d'Artagnan is little more than a boy; and as he has not the honor of being a musketeer, he was dressed as a citizen. The guards of the cardinal, perceiving his youth, and that he did not belong to the corps, invited him to retire before they attacked."

"So you may plainly see, Tréville," interrupted the king, "it was they who attacked?"

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"That is true, sire; there can be no more doubt on that head. They called upon him then to retire; but he answered that he was a musketeer at heart, entirely devoted to your Majesty, and that therefore he would remain with Messieurs the Musketeers."

"Brave young man!" murmured the king.

"Well, he did remain with them; and your Majesty has in him so firm a champion that it was he who gave Jussac the terrible sword-thrust which has made the cardinal so angry."

"He who wounded Jussac!" cried the king, "he, a boy! Tréville, that 's impossible."

"It is as I have the honor to relate it to your Majesty."

"Jussac, one of the first swordsmen in the kingdom?"

"Well, sire, for once he found his master."

"I will see this young man, Tréville, — I will see him; and if anything can be done, — well, we will make it our business."

"When will your Majesty deign to receive him?"

"To-morrow, at midday, Tréville."

"Shall I bring him alone?"

"No, bring me all four together. I wish to thank them all at once. Devoted men are so rare, Tréville, that one must recompense devotedness."

"At twelve o'clock, sire, we will be at the Louvre."

"Ah! by the back staircase, Tréville, by the back stair case. It is useless to let the cardinal know."

"Yes, sire."

"You understand, Tréville, — an edict is still an edict, it is forbidden to fight, after all."

"But this encounter, sire, is quite out of the ordinary conditions of a duel. It is a brawl; and the proof is that there were five of the cardinal's Guardsmen against my three musketeers and M. d'Artagnan."

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"That is true," said the king; "but never mind, Tréville, come still by the back staircase."

Tréville smiled; but as it was indeed something to have prevailed upon this child to rebel against his master, he saluted the king respectfully, and with this agreement, took leave of him.

That evening the three musketeers were informed of the honor accorded them. As they had long been acquainted with the king, they were not much excited; but D'Artagnan, with his Gascon imagination, saw in it his future fortune, and passed the night in golden dreams. By eight o'clock in the morning he was at the appartement of Athos.

D'Artagnan found the musketeer dressed and ready to go out. As the hour to wait upon the king was not till twelve, he had made a party with Porthos and Aramis to play a game at tennis in a tennis-court situated near the stables of the Luxembourg. Athos invited D'Artagnan to follow them; and although ignorant of the game, which he had never played, he accepted, not knowing what to do with his time from nine o'clock in the morning, as it then scarcely was, till twelve.

The two musketeers were already there, and were playing together. Athos, who was very expert in all bodily exercises, passed with D'Artagnan to the opposite side, and challenged them; but at the first effort he made, although he played with his left hand, he found that his wound was yet too recent to allow of such exertion. D'Artagnan remained, therefore, alone; and as he declared he was too ignorant of the game to play it regularly, they only continued giving balls to one another without counting. But one of these balls, launched by Porthos's Herculean hand, passed so close to D'Artagnan's face that he thought if instead of passing near it had hit

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him, his audience would have been probably lost, as it would have been impossible for him to have presented himself before the king. Now, as upon this audience, in his Gascon imagination, depended his future life, he saluted Aramis and Porthos politely, declaring that he would not resume the game until he should be prepared to play with them on more equal terms, and went and took his place near the cord and in the gallery.

Unfortunately for D'Artagnan, among the spectators was one of his Eminence's Guardsmen, who, still irritated by the defeat of his companions, which had happened only the day before, had promised himself to seize the first opportunity of avenging it. He believed this opportunity was now come, and addressed his neighbor: "It is not astonishing that that young man should be afraid of a ball, for he is doubtless a musketeer apprentice."

D'Artagnan turned round as if a serpent had stung him, and fixed his eyes intensely upon the guardsman who had just made this insolent speech.

"*Pardieu*," resumed the latter, twisting his mustache, "look at me as long as you like, my little gentleman! I have said what I have said."

"And as since that which you have said is too clear to require any explanation," replied D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "I beg you to follow me."

"And when?" asked the guardsman, with the same jeering air.

"At once, if you please."

"And you know who I am, without doubt?"

"I? I am completely ignorant; nor does it much disquiet me."

"You're in the wrong there; for if you knew my name, perhaps you would not be so pressing."

"What is your name?"

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"Bernajoux, at your service."

"Well, then, M. Bernajoux," said D'Artagnan, tranquilly, "I will wait for you at the door."

"Go, Monsieur, I follow you."

"Do not hurry yourself, Monsieur, lest it be observed that we go out together. You must be aware that for our undertaking, company would be in the way."

"That's true," said the guardsman, astonished that his name had not produced more effect upon the young man.

Indeed, the name of Bernajoux was known to all the world, D'Artagnan alone excepted, perhaps; for it was one of those which figured most frequently in the daily brawls which all the edicts of the cardinal could not repress.

Porthos and Aramis were so engaged with their game, and Athos was watching them with so much attention, that they did not even perceive their young companion go out, who, as he had told the guardsman of his Eminence, stopped outside the door. An instant after, the guardsman descended in his turn. As D'Artagnan had no time to lose, on account of the audience of the king, which was fixed for midday, he cast his eyes around, and seeing that the street was empty, said to his adversary, "My faith, it is fortunate for you, although your name is Bernajoux, to have only to deal with an apprentice musketeer. Never mind; be content, I will do my best. On guard!"

"But," said he whom D'Artagnan thus provoked, "it appears to me that this place is badly chosen, and that we should be better behind the Abbey St. Germain or in the Pré-aux-Clercs."

"What you say is full of sense," replied D'Artagnan; "but unfortunately, I have very little time to spare, having an appointment at twelve precisely. On guard, then, Monsieur, on guard!"

Bernajoux was not a man to have such a compliment

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paid to him twice. In an instant his sword glittered in his hand, and he sprang upon his adversary, whom, thanks to his great youthfulness, he hoped to intimidate.

But D'Artagnan had on the preceding day served his apprenticeship. Fresh sharpened by his victory, full of hopes of future favor, he was resolved not to recoil a step. So the two swords were crossed close to the hilts, and as D'Artagnan stood firm, it was his adversary who made the retreating step; but D'Artagnan seized the moment at which, in this movement, the sword of Bernajoux deviated from the line. He freed his weapon, made a lunge, and touched his adversary on the shoulder. D'Artagnan immediately made a step backwards and raised his sword; but Bernajoux cried out that it was nothing, and rushing blindly upon him, absolutely spitted himself upon D'Artagnan's sword. As, however, he did not fall, as he did not declare himself conquered, but only broke away towards the hôtel of M. de la Trémouille, in whose service he had a relative, D'Artagnan was ignorant of the seriousness of the last wound his adversary had received, and pressing him warmly, without doubt would soon have completed his work with a third blow, when the noise which arose from the street being heard in the tennis-court, two of the friends of the guardsman, who had seen him go out after exchanging some words with D'Artagnan, rushed, sword in hand, from the court, and fell upon the conqueror. But Athos, Porthos, and Aramis quickly appeared in their turn, and the moment the two guardsmen attacked their young companion, drove them back. Bernajoux now fell, and as the guardsmen were only two against four, they began to cry, "To the rescue! the Hôtel de la Trémouille!" At these cries, all who were in the hôtel rushed out and fell upon the four companions, who on their side cried aloud, "Help, Musketeers!"

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This cry was generally heeded; for the Musketeers were known to be enemies of the cardinal, and were beloved on account of the hatred they bore to his Eminence. Thus the soldiers of other companies than those which belonged to the Red Duke, as Aramis had called him, often took part with the king's Musketeers in these quarrels. Of three guardsmen of the company of M. d'Essart, who were passing, two came to the assistance of the four companions, while the other ran towards the hôtel of M. de Tréville, crying, "To the rescue, Musketeers! To the rescue!" As usual, this hôtel was full of soldiers of this company, who hastened to the succor of their comrades. The *mêlée* became general, but strength was on the side of the Musketeers. The cardinal's Guards and M. de la Trémouille's people retreated into the hôtel, the doors of which they closed just in time to prevent their enemies from entering with them. As to the wounded man, he had been taken in at once, and, as we have said, in a very bad state.

Excitement was at its height among the Musketeers and their allies, and they even began to deliberate whether they should not set fire to the hôtel to punish the insolence of M. de la Trémouille's domestics, in daring to make a *sortie* upon the king's Musketeers. The proposition had been made, and received with enthusiasm, when fortunately eleven o'clock struck. D'Artagnan and his companions remembered their audience, and as they would very much have regretted that such an opportunity should be lost, they succeeded in calming their friends, who contented themselves with hurling some paving-stones against the gates; but the gates were too strong. They soon tired of the sport. Besides, those who must be considered as the leaders of the enterprise had quitted the group, and were making their way towards the hôtel

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of M. de Tréville, who was waiting for them, already informed of this fresh disturbance.

"Quick, to the Louvre," said he, — "to the Louvre without losing an instant, and let us endeavor to see the king before he is prejudiced by the cardinal. We will describe the thing to him as a consequence of the affair of yesterday, and the two will pass off together."

M. de Tréville, accompanied by the four young fellows, directed his course towards the Louvre; but to the great astonishment of the captain of the Musketeers, he was informed that the king had gone stag-hunting in the forest of St. Germain. M. de Tréville required this intelligence to be repeated to him twice, and each time his companions saw his brow become darker.

"Had his Majesty," asked he, "any intention of holding this hunting party yesterday?"

"No, your excellency," replied the valet de chambre, "the Master of the Hounds came this morning to inform him that he had marked down a stag. At first the king answered that he would not go; but he could not resist his love of sport, and set out after dinner."

"And the king has seen the cardinal?" asked M. de Tréville.

"In all probability he has," replied the valet, "for I saw the horses harnessed to his Eminence's carriage this morning, and when I asked where he was going, they told me, 'To St. Germain.'"

"He is beforehand with us," said M. de Tréville. "Gentlemen, I will see the king this evening; but as to you, I do not advise you to risk doing so."

This advice was too reasonable, and moreover, came from a man who knew the king too well to allow the four young men to dispute it. M. de Tréville recommended them every one to return home, and wait for news.

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On entering his hôtel, M. de Tréville thought it best to be first in making the complaint. He sent one of his servants to M. de la Trémouille with a letter, in which he begged of him to eject the cardinal's Guardsmen from his house, and to reprimand his people for their audacity in making *sortie* against the king's Musketeers. But M. de la Trémouille, — already prejudiced by his esquire, whose relative, as we already know, Bernajoux was, — replied that it was neither for M. de Tréville nor the Musketeers to complain, but on the contrary, he, whose people the Musketeers had assaulted, and whose hôtel they had endeavored to burn. Now, as the debate between these two nobles might last a long time, each becoming, naturally, more firm in his own opinion, M. de Tréville thought of an expedient which might terminate it quietly. This was to go himself to M. de la Trémouille.

He repaired, therefore, immediately to his hôtel, and caused himself to be announced.

The two nobles saluted each other politely, for if no friendship existed between them, there was at least esteem. Both were men of courage and honor; and as M. de la Trémouille — a Protestant, and seeing the king seldom — was of no party, he did not, in general, carry any bias into his social relations. This time, however, his address, although polite, was cooler than usual.

"Monsieur," said M. de Tréville, "we fancy that we have each cause to complain of the other, and I am come to endeavor to clear up this affair."

"I have no objection," replied M. de la Trémouille, "but I warn you that I am well informed, and all the fault is with your Musketeers."

"You are too just and reasonable a man, Monsieur!" said Tréville, "not to accept the proposal I am about to make to you."

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"Make it, Monsieur, I listen."

"How is M. Bernajoux, your esquire's relative?"

"Why, Monsieur, very ill, indeed! In addition to the sword-thrust in his arm, which is not dangerous, he has received another right through his lungs, of which the doctor says bad things."

"But has the wounded man retained his senses?"

"Perfectly."

"Does he talk?"

"With difficulty, but he can speak."

"Well, Monsieur, let us go to him. Let us adjure him, in the name of the God, before whom he must perhaps appear, to speak the truth. I will take him for judge in his own cause, Monsieur, and will believe what he will say."

M. de la Trémouille reflected for an instant; then as it was difficult to suggest a more reasonable proposal, he agreed to it.

Both descended to the chamber in which the wounded man lay. The latter, on seeing these two noble lords who came to visit him, endeavored to raise himself up in his bed; but he was too weak, and exhausted by the effort, he fell back again almost senseless.

M. de la Trémouille approached him, and made him inhale some salts, which recalled him to life. Then M. de Tréville, unwilling that it should be thought that he had influenced the wounded man, requested M. de la Trémouille to interrogate him himself.

That happened which M. de Tréville had foreseen. Placed between life and death, as Bernajoux was, he had no idea for a moment of concealing the truth; and he described to the two nobles the affair exactly as it had passed.

This was all that M. de Tréville wanted. He wished

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Bernajoux a speedy convalescence, took leave of M. de la Trémouille, returned to his hôtel, and immediately sent word to the four friends that he awaited their company at dinner.

M. de Tréville entertained good company, wholly anti-cardinalist, though. It may easily be understood, therefore, that the conversation during the whole of dinner turned upon the two checks that his Eminence's Guardsmen had received. Now, as D'Artagnan had been the hero of these two fights, it was upon him that all the felicitations fell, which Athos, Porthos, and Aramis abandoned to him, not only as good comrades, but as men who had so often had their turn that they could very well afford him his.

Towards six o'clock M. de Tréville announced that it was time to go to the Louvre; but as the hour of audience granted by his Majesty was past, instead of claiming the *entrée* by the back stairs, he placed himself with the four young men in the antechamber. The king had not yet returned from hunting. Our young men had been waiting about half an hour, amid a crowd of courtiers, when all the doors were thrown open, and his Majesty was announced.

At this announcement D'Artagnan felt himself tremble to the very marrow of his bones. The coming instant would in all probability decide the rest of his life. His eyes therefore were fixed in a sort of agony upon the door through which the king must enter.

Louis XIII. appeared, walking first. He was in hunting costume covered with dust, wearing large boots, and holding a whip in his hand. At the first glance D'Artagnan judged that the mind of the king was stormy.

This disposition, visible as it was in his Majesty, did not prevent the courtiers from ranging themselves along his pathway. In royal antechambers it is worth more

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to be viewed with an angry eye than not to be seen at all. The three musketeers therefore did not hesitate to make a step forward. D'Artagnan on the contrary remained concealed behind them; but although the king knew Athos, Porthos, and Aramis personally, he passed before them without speaking or looking, — indeed, as if he had never seen them before. As for M. de Tréville, when the eyes of the king fell upon him, he sustained the look with so much firmness that it was the king who dropped his eyes; after which his Majesty, grumbling, entered his appartement.

"Matters go but badly," said Athos, smiling; "and we shall not be made Chevaliers of the Order this time."

"Wait here ten minutes," said M. de Tréville; "and if at the expiration of ten minutes you do not see me come out, return to my hôtel, for it will be useless for you to wait for me longer."

The four young men waited ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes; and seeing that M. de Tréville did not return, went away very uneasy as to what was going to happen.

M. de Tréville entered the king's cabinet boldly, and found his Majesty in a very ill humor, seated on an armchair, beating his boot with the handle of his whip. This, however, did not prevent his asking, with the greatest coolness, after his Majesty's health.

"Bad, Monsieur, bad!" replied the king; "I am bored."

This was, in fact, the worst complaint of Louis XIII., who would sometimes take one of his courtiers to a window, and say, "Monsieur So-and-so, let us weary ourselves together."

"How! your Majesty is bored? Have you not enjoyed the pleasures of the chase to-day?"

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"A fine pleasure, indeed, Monsieur! Upon my soul, everything degenerates; and I don't know whether it is the game which leaves no scent, or the dogs that have no noses. We started a stag of ten branches. We chased him for six hours, and when he was near being taken, — when Saint-Simon was already putting his horn to his mouth to sound the *halali*, — crack, all the pack takes the wrong scent, and sets off after a two-year-older. I shall be obliged to give up hunting, as I have given up hawking. Ah, I am an unfortunate king, M. de Tréville! I had but one gerfalcon, and he died day before yesterday."

"Indeed, sire, I wholly comprehend your disappointment. The misfortune is great; but I think you have still a good number of falcons, sparrow-hawks, and tiercets."

"And not a man to instruct them. Falconers are declining. I know no one but myself who is acquainted with the noble art of venery. After me it will be all over, and people will hunt with gins, snares, and traps. If I had but the time to train pupils! But there is the cardinal always at hand, who does not leave me a moment's repose; who talks to me about Spain, who talks to me about Austria, who talks to me about England! Ah! *à propos* of the cardinal, M. de Tréville, I am vexed with you."

This was the chance at which M. de Tréville waited for the king. He knew the king of old, and he knew that all these complaints were but a preface, — a sort of excitation to encourage himself, — and that he had now come to his point at last.

"And in what have I been so unfortunate as to displease your Majesty?" asked M. de Tréville, feigning the most profound astonishment.

"Is it thus you perform your charge, Monsieur?" continued the king, without directly replying to De Tréville's

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question. "Is it for this I name you captain of my Musketeers, that they should assassinate a man, disturb a whole quarter, and endeavor to set fire to Paris, without your saying a word? But yet," continued the king, "undoubtedly my haste accuses you wrongfully; without doubt the rioters are in prison, and you come to tell me justice is done."

"Sire," replied M. de Tréville, calmly, "on the contrary I come to demand it of you."

"And against whom?" cried the king.

"Against calumniators," said M. de Tréville.

"Ah! this is something new," replied the king. "Will you tell me that your three damned musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and your youngster from Béarn, have not fallen, like so many furies, upon poor Bernajoux, and have not maltreated him in such a fashion that probably by this time he is dead? Will you tell me that they did not lay siege to the hôtel of the Duc de la Trémouille, and that they did not endeavor to burn it? — which would not, perhaps, have been a great misfortune in time of war, seeing that it is nothing but a nest of Huguenots, but which is, in time of peace, a frightful example. Tell me, now, — can you deny all this?"

"And who has told you this fine story, sire?" asked Tréville, quietly.

"Who has told me this fine story, Monsieur? Who should it be but he who watches while I sleep, who labors while I amuse myself, who conducts everything at home and abroad, — in France as in Europe?"

"Your Majesty probably refers to God," said M. de Tréville; "for I know no one except God who can be so far above your Majesty."

"No, Monsieur; I speak of the prop of the State, of my only servant, of my only friend, — of the cardinal."

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"His Eminence is not his Holiness, sire."

"What do you mean by that, Monsieur?"

"That it is only the Pope who is infallible, and that this infallibility does not extend to cardinals."

"You mean to say that he deceives me; you mean to say that he betrays me? You accuse him, then? Come, speak; avow freely that you accuse him!"

"No, sire; but I say that he deceives himself. I say that he is ill-informed. I say that he has hastily accused your Majesty's Musketeers, towards whom he is unjust, and that he has not obtained his information from good sources."

"The accusation comes from M. de la Trémouille, from the duke himself. What do you say to that?"

"I might answer, sire, that he is too deeply interested in the question to be a very impartial witness; but so far from that, sire, I know the duke to be a loyal gentleman, and I refer the matter to him, — but upon one condition, sire."

"What?"

"It is, that your Majesty will make him come here, will interrogate him yourself, *tête-à-tête*, without witnesses, and that I shall see your Majesty as soon as you have seen the duke."

"What, then! you will bind yourself," cried the king, "by what M. de la Trémouille shall say?"

"Yes, sire."

"You will accept his judgment?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And you will submit to the reparation he may require?"

"Certainly."

"La Chesnaye!" cried the king. "La Chesnaye!"

Louis XIII.'s confidential valet, who never left the door, entered in reply to the call.

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"La Chesnaye," said the king, "let some one go instantly and find M. de la Trémouille; I wish to speak with him this evening."

"Your Majesty gives me your word that you will not see any one between M. de la Trémouille and myself?"

"Nobody, by the faith of a gentleman."

"To-morrow, then, sire?"

"To-morrow, Monsieur."

"At what o'clock, please your Majesty?

"At any hour you will."

"But in coming too early I should be afraid of awakening your Majesty."

"Awaken me! Do you think I ever sleep, then? I sleep no longer, Monsieur. I sometimes dream, that's all. Come, then, as early as you like, — at seven o'clock; but beware, if you and your musketeers are guilty."

"If my musketeers are guilty, sire, the guilty shall be placed in your Majesty's hands, who will dispose of them at your good pleasure. Does your Majesty require anything further? Speak, I am ready to obey."

"No, Monsieur, no; I am not called Louis the Just without reason. To-morrow, then, Monsieur, — to-morrow."

"Till then, God preserve your Majesty!"

However ill the king might sleep, M. de Tréville slept still worse. He had ordered his three musketeers and their companion to be with him at half-past six in the morning. He took them with him, without encouraging them or promising them anything, and without concealing from them that their luck, and even his own, depended upon this cast of the dice.

Arrived at the foot of the back stairs, he desired them to wait. If the king was still irritated against them, they would depart without being seen; if the king consented to see them, they would only have to be called.

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On arriving at the king's private antechamber, M. de Tréville found La Chesnaye, who informed him that they had not been able to find M. de la Trémouille on the preceding evening at his hôtel, that he returned too late to present himself at the Louvre, that he had only that moment arrived, and that he was at that very hour with the king.

This circumstance pleased M. de Tréville much, as he thus became certain that no foreign suggestion could insinuate itself between M. de la Trémouille's testimony and himself.

In fact, ten minutes had scarcely passed away, when the door of the king's closet opened, and M. de Tréville saw M. de la Trémouille come out. The duke came straight up to him, and said: "M. de Tréville, his Majesty has just sent for me in order to inquire respecting the circumstances which took place yesterday at my hôtel. I have told him the truth; that is to say, that the fault lay with my people, and that I was ready to offer you my excuses. Since I have the good fortune to meet you, I beg you to receive them, and to hold me always as one of your friends."

"Monsieur the Duke," said M. de Tréville, "I was so confident of your loyalty that I required no other defender before his Majesty than yourself. I find that I have not been mistaken, and I thank you that there is still one man in France of whom may be said, without disappointment, what I have said of you."

"That 's well said," cried the king, who had heard all these compliments through the open door; "only tell him, Tréville, since he wishes to be considered as your friend, that I also wish to be one of his, but he neglects me; that it is nearly three years since I have seen him, and that I never do see him unless I send for him. Tell him all this

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for me, for these are things which a king cannot say for himself."

"Thanks, sire, thanks," said the duke; "but your Majesty may be assured that it is not those — I do not speak of M. de Tréville — that it is not those whom your Majesty sees at all hours of the day that are the most devoted to you."

"Ah! you have heard what I said? So much the better, Duke, so much the better," said the king, advancing towards the door. "Ah! it is you, Tréville. Where are your musketeers? I told you the day before yesterday to bring them with you; why have you not done so?"

"They are below, sire, and with your permission La Chesnaye will bid them come up."

"Yes, yes, let them come up immediately. It is nearly eight o'clock, and at nine I expect a visit. Go, Monsieur Duke, and return often. Come in, Tréville."

The duke saluted and retired. At the moment he opened the door, the three musketeers and D'Artagnan, conducted by La Chesnaye, appeared at the top of the staircase.

"Come in, my braves," said the king, "come in; I am going to scold you."

The musketeers advanced, bowing, D'Artagnan following closely behind them.

"What the devil!" continued the king. "Seven of his Eminence's Guards placed *hors de combat* by you four in two days! That 's too many, gentlemen, too many! If you go on so, his Eminence will be forced to renew his company in three weeks, and I to put the edicts in force in all their rigor. One now and then I don't say much about; but seven in two days, I repeat, it is too many, it is far too many!"

"Therefore, sire, your Majesty sees that they are

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come, quite contrite and repentant, to offer you their excuses."

"Quite contrite and repentant! Hem!" said the king. "I place no confidence in their hypocritical faces. In particular, there is one yonder of a Gascon look. Come hither, Monsieur."

D'Artagnan, who understood that it was to him this compliment was addressed, approached, assuming a most deprecating air.

"Why, you told me he was a young man? This is a boy, Tréville, a mere boy! Do you mean to say that it was he who bestowed that severe thrust at Jussac?"

"And those two equally fine thrusts at Bernajoux."

"Truly!"

"Without reckoning," said Athos, "that if he had not rescued me from the hands of Cahusac, I should not now have the honor of making my very humble reverence to your Majesty."

"Why, he is a very devil, this Béarnais! *Ventre-saint-gris*, M. de Tréville, as the king my father would have said. But at this sort of work, many doublets must be slashed and many swords broken. Now Gascons are always poor, are they not?"

"Sire, I can assert that they have hitherto discovered no gold mines in their mountains; though the Lord owes them this miracle, in recompense for the manner in which they supported the pretensions of the king, your father."

"Which is to say that the Gascons made a king of me, myself, seeing that I am my father's son, is it not, Tréville? Well, happily, I don't say nay to it. La Chesnaye, go and see if by rummaging all my pockets you can find forty pistoles; and if you can find them, bring them to me. And now let us see, young man, with your hand upon your conscience, how did all this come to pass?"

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D'Artagnan related the adventure of the preceding day in all its details: how, not having been able to sleep for the joy he felt in the expectation of seeing his Majesty, he had gone to his three friends three hours before the hour of audience; how they had gone together to the tennis-court, and how, upon the fear he had manifested lest he receive a ball in the face, he had been jeered at by Bernajoux, who had nearly paid for his jeer with his life, and M. de la Trémouille, who had nothing to do with the matter, with the loss of his hôtel.

"This is all very well," murmured the king; "yes, this is just the account the duke gave me of the affair. Poor cardinal! Seven men in two days, and those of his very best! But that's quite enough, gentlemen; please to understand, that's enough. You have taken your revenge for the Rue Férou, and even exceeded it; you ought to be satisfied."

"If your Majesty is so," said Tréville, "we are."

"Oh, yes; I am," added the king, taking a handful of gold from La Chesnaye, and putting it into the hand of D'Artagnan. "Here," said he, "is a proof of my satisfaction."

At this epoch, the ideas of pride which are in fashion in our days did not prevail. A gentleman received, from hand to hand, money from the king, and was not the least in the world humiliated. D'Artagnan put his forty pistoles into his pocket without any scruple, — on the contrary, thanking his Majesty greatly.

"There," said the king, looking at a clock, — "there, now, as it is half-past eight, you may retire; for, as I told you, I expect some one at nine. Thanks for your devotedness, gentlemen. I may continue to rely upon it, may I not?"

"Oh, sire!" cried the four companions, with one voice,

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"we would allow ourselves to be cut to pieces in your Majesty's service."

"Well, well, but keep whole; that will be better, and you will be more useful to me. Tréville," added the king, in a low voice, as the others were retiring, "as you have no room in the Musketeers, and as we have besides decided that a novitiate is necessary before entering that corps, place this young man in the company of the Guards of M. d'Essart, your brother-in-law. Ah, *pardieu*, Tréville! I enjoy beforehand the face the cardinal will make. He will be furious; but I don't care. I am doing what is right."

The king waved his hand to Tréville, who left him and rejoined the musketeers, whom he found sharing the forty pistoles with D'Artagnan.

The cardinal, as his Majesty had said, was really furious, so furious that during eight days he absented himself from the king's gaming-table. This did not prevent the king from being as complacent to him as possible whenever he met him, or from asking in the kindest tone, "Well, Monsieur Cardinal, how fares it with that poor Juvsac, and that poor Bernajoux of yours?"

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CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUSEKEEPING OF THE MUSKETEERS.

When D'Artagnan was out of the Louvre, and consulted his friends upon the use he had best make of his share of the forty pistoles, Athos advised him to order a good repast at the Fir Cone, Porthos to engage a lackey, and Aramis to provide himself with a suitable mistress.

The repast was carried into effect that very day, and the lackey waited at table. The repast had been ordered by Athos, and the lackey furnished by Porthos. He was a Picard, whom the glorious musketeer had picked up on the Bridge Tournelle, making rings and plashing in the water.

Porthos pretended that this occupation was a proof of a reflective and contemplative organization, and he had brought him away without any other recommendation. The noble carriage of this gentleman, for whom he believed himself to be engaged, had won Planchet, — that was the name of the Picard. He felt a slight disappointment, however, when he saw that this place was already taken by a compeer named Mousqueton, and when Porthos signified to him that the state of his household, though great, would not support two servants, and that he must enter into the service of D'Artagnan. Nevertheless, when he waited at the dinner given by his master, and saw him take out a handful of gold to pay for it, he believed his fortune made, and returned thanks to Heaven for having thrown him into the service of such a Crœsus. He pre-

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served this opinion even after the feast, with the remnants of which he repaired his own long abstinence; but when in the evening he made his master's bed, the chimeras of Planchet faded away. The bed was the only one in the appartement, which consisted of an antechamber and a bedroom. Planchet slept in the antechamber upon a coverlet taken from the bed of D'Artagnan, and which D'Artagnan from that time made shift to do without.

Athos, on his part, had a valet whom he had trained in his service in a thoroughly peculiar fashion, and who was named Grimaud. He was very taciturn, this worthy signor. Be it understood we are speaking of Athos. During the five or six years that he had lived in the strictest intimacy with his companions, Porthos and Aramis, they could remember having often seen him smile, but had never heard him laugh. His words were brief and expressive, conveying all that was meant, and no more; no embellishments, no embroidery, no arabesques. His conversation was a matter of fact, without a single romance.

Although Athos was scarcely thirty years old, and was of great personal beauty and intelligence of mind, no one knew whether he had ever had a mistress. He never spoke of women. He certainly did not prevent others from speaking of them before him, although it was easy to perceive that this kind of conversation, in which he only mingled by bitter words and misanthropic remarks, was very disagreeable to him. His reserve, his roughness, and his silence made almost an old man of him. He had, then, in order not to disturb his habits, accustomed Grimaud to obey him upon a simple gesture, or upon a simple movement of his lips. He never spoke to him, except under the most extraordinary occasions.

Sometimes Grimaud, who feared his master as he did fire, while entertaining a strong attachment to his person,

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and a great veneration for his talents, believed he perfectly understood what he wanted, flew to execute the order received, and did precisely the contrary. Athos then shrugged his shoulders, and, without putting himself in a passion, thrashed Grimaud. On these days he spoke a little.

Porthos, as we have seen, had a character exactly opposite to that of Athos. He not only talked much, but he talked loudly, little caring, we must render him that justice, whether anybody listened to him or not. He talked for the pleasure of talking, and for the pleasure of hearing himself talk. He spoke upon all subjects except the sciences, alleging in this respect the inveterate hatred he had borne to scholars from his childhood. He had not so noble an air as Athos, and the consciousness of his inferiority in this respect had at the commencement of their intimacy often rendered him unjust towards that gentleman, whom he endeavored to eclipse by his splendid dress. But with his simple musketeer's uniform and nothing but the manner in which he threw back his head and advanced his foot, Athos instantly took the place which was his due, and consigned the ostentatious Porthos to the second rank. Porthos consoled himself by filling the antechamber of M. de Tréville and the guardroom of the Louvre with the accounts of his love scrapes, of which Athos never spoke; and at the present moment, after having passed from professional ladies to military ladies, from the lawyer's dame to the baroness, there was question of nothing less with Porthos than a foreign princess, who was enormously fond of him.

An old proverb says, "Like master like man." Let us pass then from the valet of Athos to the valet of Porthos, from Grimaud to Mousqueton.

Mousqueton was a Norman, whose pacific name of Boniface his master had changed into the infinitely more

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sonorous name of Mousqueton. He had entered the service of Porthos upon condition that he should only be clothed and lodged, though in a handsome manner; but he claimed two hours a day to himself, consecrated to an employment which would provide for his other wants. Porthos agreed to the bargain; the thing suited him wonderfully well. He had doublets cut out of his old clothes and cast-off cloaks for Mousqueton, and thanks to a very intelligent tailor, who made his clothes look as good as new by turning them, and whose wife was suspected of wishing to make Porthos descend from his aristocratic habits, Mousqueton made a very good figure when attending on his master.

As for Aramis, of whom we believe we have sufficiently explained the character, — a character which, like that of his companions, we shall be able to follow in its development, — his lackey was called Bazin. Thanks to the hopes which his master entertained of some day entering into orders, he was always clothed in black, as became the servant of a churchman. He was a Berrichon, thirty-five or forty years old, mild, peaceable, sleek, employing the leisure his master left him in the perusal of pious works, providing rigorously for two a dinner of few dishes, but excellent. For the rest, he was dumb, blind, and deaf, and of unimpeachable fidelity.

And now that we are acquainted, superficially at least, with the masters and the valets, let us pass on to the dwellings occupied by each of them.

Athos dwelt in the Rue Férou, within two steps of the Luxembourg. His appartement consisted of two small chambers, very nicely fitted up, in a furnished house, the hostess of which, still young and still really handsome, cast tender glances uselessly at him. Some fragments of past splendor appeared here and there upon the walls

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of this modest lodging; a sword, for example, richly embossed, which belonged by its make to the times of Francis I., the hilt of which alone, incrusted with precious stones, might be worth two hundred pistoles, and which, nevertheless, in his moments of greatest distress Athos had never pledged or offered for sale. It had long been an object of ambition for Porthos. Porthos would have given ten years of his life to possess this sword.

One day, when he had an appointment with a duchess, he endeavored even to borrow it of Athos. Athos, without saying anything, emptied his pockets, got together all his jewels, purses, aiguillettes, and gold chains, and offered them all to Porthos; but as to the sword, he said it was sealed to its place, and should never quit it until its master should himself quit his lodgings. In addition to the sword, there was a portrait representing a nobleman of the time of Henry III., dressed with the greatest elegance, and who wore the order of the Holy Ghost; and this portrait had certain resemblances of lines with Athos, certain family likenesses which indicated that this great noble, a knight of the Order of the King, was his ancestor.

Besides these, a casket of magnificent goldwork, with the same arms as the sword and the portrait, formed a middle ornament to the mantel-piece, and assorted badly with the rest of the furniture. Athos always carried the key of this coffer about him; but he one day opened it before Porthos, and Porthos was convinced that this coffer contained nothing but letters and papers, — love-letters and family papers, no doubt.

Porthos lived in an appartement, large in size, and of very sumptuous appearance, in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier. Every time he passed with a friend before his windows, at one of which Mousqueton was sure to be placed in full livery, Porthos raised his head and his hand, and said,

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"That is my abode!" But he was never to be found at home; he never invited anybody to go up with him, and no one could form an idea of what this sumptuous appartement contained in the shape of real riches.

As to Aramis, he dwelt in a little lodging composed of a boudoir, an eating-room, and a bed-room, which room, situated, as the others were, on the ground-floor, looked out upon a little fresh green garden, shady, and impenetrable to the eyes of his neighbors.

With regard to D'Artagnan, we know how he was lodged, and we have already made acquaintance with his lackey, Master Planchet.

D'Artagnan, who was by nature very curious, — as people generally are who possess the genius of intrigue, — did all he could to make out who Athos, Porthos, and Aramis really were; for under these pseudonymes each of these young men concealed his family name, — Athos in particular, who, a league away, savored of nobility. He addressed himself then to Porthos, to gain information respecting Athos and Aramis, and to Aramis, in order to learn something of Porthos.

Unfortunately Porthos knew nothing of the life of his silent companion but what revealed itself. It was said he had met with great crosses in love, and that a frightful treachery had forever poisoned the life of this gallant man. What could this treachery be? All the world was ignorant of it.

As to Porthos, except his real name, which no one but M. de Tréville was acquainted with (as was the case with those of his two comrades), his life was very easily known. Vain and indiscreet, it was as easy to see through him as through a crystal. The only thing to mislead the investigator would have been belief in all the good things he said of himself.

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With respect to Aramis, though having the air of having nothing secret about him, he was a young fellow made up of mysteries, answering little to questions put to him about others, and eluding those that concerned himself. One day, D'Artagnan, having for a long time interrogated him about Porthos, and having learned from him the report which prevailed concerning the success of the musketeer with a princess, wished to gain a little insight into the amorous adventures of his interlocutor. "And you, my dear companion," said he, "you who speak of the baronesses, countesses, and princesses of others?"

"*Pardieu!* I spoke of them because Porthos talked of them himself, because he has paraded all these fine things before me. But, be assured, my dear M. d'Artagnan, that if I had obtained them from any other source, or if they had been confided to me, there exists no confessor more discreet than myself."

"Oh, I don't doubt that," replied D'Artagnan; "but it seems to me that you are tolerably familiar with coats-of-arms, — a certain embroidered handkerchief, for instance, to which I owe the honor of your acquaintance?"

This time Aramis was not angry, but assumed the most modest air, and replied in a friendly tone, "My dear friend, do not forget that I wish to belong to the Church, and that I avoid all mundane opportunities. The handkerchief you saw had not been given to me, but it had been forgotten, and left at my house by one of my friends. I was obliged to pick it up in order not to compromise him and the lady he loves. As for myself, I neither have, nor desire to have, a mistress, following in that respect the very judicious example of Athos, who has none, any more than I have."

"But what the devil! you are not a priest, you are a musketeer!"

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"A musketeer for a time, my friend, as the cardinal says, a musketeer against my will, but a churchman at heart, believe me. Athos and Porthos dragged me into this to occupy me. I had, at the moment of being ordained, a little difficulty with — But that would not interest you, and I am taking up your valuable time."

"Not at all; it interests me very much," cried D'Artagnan; "and at this moment I have absolutely nothing to do."

"Yes, but I have my breviary to repeat," answered Aramis; "then some verses to compose, which Madame d'Aiguillon begged of me. Then I must go to the Rue St. Honoré, in order to purchase some rouge for Madame de Chevreuse. So you see, my dear friend, that if you are not in a hurry, I am very much in a hurry."

Aramis held out his hand in a cordial manner to his young companion, and took leave of him.

Notwithstanding all the pains he took, D Artagnan was unable to learn any more concerning his three new-made friends. He formed, therefore, the resolution of believing for the present all that was said of their past, hoping for more certain and extended revelations in the future. In the mean while, he looked upon Athos as an Achilles, Porthos as an Ajax, and Aramis as a Joseph.

As to the rest, the life of the four young fellows was joyous enough. Athos played, and that as a rule unfortunately. Nevertheless, he never borrowed a sou of his companions, although his purse was ever at their service; and when he had played upon honor, he always awakened his creditor by six o'clock the next morning to pay the debt of the preceding evening.

Porthos had his fits. On the days when he won he was insolent and ostentatious; if he lost, he disappeared completely for several days, after which he reappeared

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with a pale face and thinner person, but with money in his purse.

As to Aramis, he never played. He was the worst musketeer and the most unconvivial companion imaginable. He had always something or other to do. Sometimes, in the midst of dinner, when every one, under the attraction of wine and in the warmth of conversation, believed they had two or three hours longer to enjoy themselves at table, Aramis looked at his watch, arose with a bland smile, and took leave of the company, to go, as he said, to consult a casuist with whom he had an appointment. At other times he would return home to write a treatise, and requested his friends not to disturb him.

At this Athos would smile, with his charming, melancholy smile, which so became his noble countenance, and Porthos would drink, swearing that Aramis would never be anything but a village *curé*.

Planchet, D'Artagnan's valet, supported his good fortune nobly. He received thirty sous per day, and for a month he returned to his lodgings gay as a chaffinch, and affable towards his master. When the wind of adversity began to blow upon the housekeeping of the Rue des Fossoyeurs, — that is to say, when the forty pistoles of King Louis XIII. were consumed, or nearly so, — he commenced complaints which Athos thought nauseous, Porthos indecent, and Aramis ridiculous. Athos counselled D'Artagnan to dismiss the fellow; Porthos was of opinion that he should give him a good thrashing first; and Aramis contended that a master should never attend to anything but the civilities paid to him.

"This is all very easy for you to say," replied D'Artagnan, — "for you, Athos, who live like a dumb man with Grimaud, who forbid him to speak, and consequently

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never exchange ill words with him; for you, Porthos, who carry matters in such magnificent style, and are a god to your valet Mousqueton; and for you, Aramis, who, always abstracted by your theological studies, inspire your servant Bazin, a mild, religious man, with a profound respect; but for me, who am without any settled means, and without resources, — for me, who am neither a musketeer, nor even a guardsman, what am I to do to inspire either the affection, the terror, or the respect in Planchet?"

"This is serious," answered the three friends; "it is a family affair. It is with valets as with wives, they must be placed at once upon the footing in which you wish them to remain. Reflect upon it."

D'Artagnan did reflect, and resolved to thrash Planchet provisionally; which he did with the conscientiousness that D'Artagnan carried into everything. After having well beaten him, he forbade him to leave his service without his permission. "For," added he, "the future cannot fail to mend; I inevitably look for better times. Your fortune is therefore made if you remain with me, and I am too good a master to allow you to miss such a chance by granting you the dismissal you require."

This manner of acting roused much respect for D'Artagnan's policy among the Musketeers. Planchet was equally seized with admiration, and said no more about going away.

The life of the four young men had become fraternal. D'Artagnan, who had no settled habits of his own, as he came from his province into the midst of a world quite new to him, fell easily into the habits of his friends.

They rose about eight o'clock in the winter, about six in summer, and went to take the countersign and see how things went on at M. de Tréville's. D'Artagnan, although he was not a musketeer, performed the duty of one with

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remarkable punctuality. He went on guard because he always kept company with whomsoever of his friends was on duty. He was well known at the Hôtel of the Musketeers, where every one considered him a good comrade. M. de Tréville, who had appreciated him at the first glance, and who bore him a real affection, never ceased recommending him to the king.

On their side, the three musketeers were much attached to their young comrade. The friendship which united these four men, and the want they felt of seeing one another three or four times a day, whether for duelling, business, or pleasure, caused them to be continually running after one another like shadows; and the Inseparables were constantly to be met with seeking one another, from the Luxembourg to the Place St. Sulpice, or from the Rue du Vieux-Colombier to the Luxembourg.

In the mean while the promises of M. de Tréville went on prosperously. One fine morning the king commanded M. le Chevalier d'Essart to admit D'Artagnan as a cadet in his company of Guards. D'Artagnan, with a sigh, donned this uniform, which he would have exchanged for that of a musketeer at the expense of ten years of his existence. But M. de Tréville promised this favor after a novitiate of two years,—a novitiate which might besides be abridged if an opportunity should present itself for D'Artagnan to render the king any signal service, or to distinguish himself by some brilliant action. Upon this promise D'Artagnan withdrew, and the next day he began service.

Then it became the turn of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis to mount guard with D'Artagnan when he was on duty. The company of M. le Chevalier d'Essart thus received four men instead of one when it admitted D'Artagnan.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A COURT INTRIGUE.

In the mean time, the forty pistoles of King Louis XIII., like all other things of this world, after having had a beginning had an end, and after this end our four companions began to be somewhat embarrassed. At first, Athos supported the association for a time with his own means.

Porthos succeeded him; and thanks to one of those disappearances to which he was accustomed, he was able to provide for the wants of all for a fortnight. At last it became Aramis's turn, who performed it with a good grace and who succeeded — as he said, by selling some theological books — in procuring a few pistoles.

Then, as they had been accustomed to do, they had recourse to M. de Tréville, who made some advances on their pay; but these advances could not go far with three musketeers who were already much in arrears, and a guardsman who as yet had no pay at all.

At length, when they found they were likely to be really in want, they got together, as a last effort, eight or ten pistoles, with which Porthos went to the gaming-table. Unfortunately, he was in a bad vein; he lost all, together with twenty-five pistoles for which he had given his word.

Then the inconvenience became distress. The hungry friends, followed by their lackeys, were seen haunting the quays and guard-rooms, picking up among their friends abroad all the dinners they could meet with; for according to the advice of Aramis, it was prudent to sow repasts

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right and left in prosperity, in order to reap a few in time of need.

Athos was invited four times, and each time took his friends and their lackeys with him. Porthos had six occasions, and contrived in the same manner that his friends should partake of them; Aramis had eight of them. He was a man, as must have been already perceived, who made but little noise, and yet was much sought after.

As to D'Artagnan, who as yet knew nobody in the capital, he only found one chocolate-breakfast at the house of a priest of his own province, and one dinner at the house of a cornet of the guards. He took his army to the priest's, where they devoured as much provision as would have lasted him for two months, and to the cornet's, who performed wonders; but, as Planchet said, "People do not eat at once for all time, even when they eat a good deal."

D'Artagnan thus felt himself humiliated in having only procured one meal and a half for his companions, — as the breakfast at the priest's could only be counted as half a repast, — in return for the feasts which Athos, Porthos, and Aramis had procured him. He fancied himself a burden to the society, forgetting in his perfectly juvenile good faith that he had fed this society for a month; and he set his mind actively to work. He reflected that this coalition of four young, brave, enterprising, and active men ought to have some other object than swaggering walks, fencing lessons, and practical jokes, more or less witty.

In fact, four men such as they were — four men devoted to one another, from their purses to their lives; four men always supporting one another, never yielding, executing singly or together the resolutions formed in common; four arms threatening the four cardinal points, or turning towards a single point — must inevitably, either subterraneously, in open day, by mining, in the trench, by

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cunning, or by force, open themselves a way towards the object they wish to attain, however well it might be defended, or however distant it might seem. The only thing that astonished D'Artagnan was that his friends had never yet thought of this.

He was thinking by himself, and even seriously racking his brain to find a direction for this single force four times multiplied, with which he did not doubt, as with the lever for which Archimedes sought, they should succeed in moving the world, when some one tapped gently at his door. D'Artagnan awakened Planchet and ordered him to open it.

From this phrase — "D'Artagnan awakened Planchet," — the reader must not suppose it was night, or that day was hardly come. No, it had just struck four. Planchet, two hours before, had asked his master for some dinner, and he had answered him with the proverb, "He who sleeps, dines." And Planchet dined by sleeping.

A man was introduced of simple mien, who had the appearance of a tradesman. Planchet, by way of dessert, would have liked to hear the conversation; but the citizen declared to D'Artagnan that what he had to say being important and confidential, he desired to be left alone with him.

D'Artagnan dismissed Planchet, and requested his visitor to be seated. There was a moment of silence, during which the two men looked at each other, as if to make a preliminary acquaintance, after which D'Artagnan bowed, as a sign that he listened.

"I have heard M. d'Artagnan spoken of as a very brave young man," said the citizen; "and this reputation which he justly enjoys has decided me to confide a secret to him."

"Speak, Monsieur, speak," said D'Artagnan, who instinctively scented something advantageous.

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The citizen made a fresh pause and continued, "I have a wife who is seamstress to the queen, Monsieur, and who is not deficient in either virtue or beauty. I was induced to marry her about three years ago, although she had but very little dowry, because M. Laporte, the queen's cloak-bearer, is her godfather, and befriends her."

"Well, Monsieur?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Well!" resumed the citizen, — "well, Monsieur, my wife was abducted yesterday morning, as she was coming out of her work-room."

"And by whom was your wife abducted?"

"I know nothing surely, Monsieur, but I suspect some one."

"And who is the person whom you suspect?"

"A man who has pursued her a long time."

"The devil!"

"But allow me to tell you, Monsieur," continued the citizen, "that I am convinced that there is less love than politics in all this."

"Less love than politics," replied D'Artagnan, with a reflective air; "and what do you suspect?"

"I do not know whether I ought to tell you what I suspect."

"Monsieur, I beg you to observe that I ask you absolutely nothing. It is you who have come to me. It is you who have told me that you had a secret to confide to me. Act then as you think proper; there is still time to withdraw."

"No, Monsieur, no; you appear to be an honest young man, and I will have confidence in you. I believe, then, that it is not on account of any intrigues of her own that my wife has been arrested, but because of those of a lady much greater than herself."

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"Ah, ah! can it be on account of the amours of Madame de Bois-Tracy?" said D'Artagnan, wishing to have the air, in the eyes of the citizen, of being posted as to court affairs.

"Higher, Monsieur, higher."

"Of Madame d'Aiguillon?"

"Still higher."

"Of Madame de Chevreuse?"

"Higher, much higher."

"Of the —" D'Artagnan checked himself.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the terrified citizen, in a tone so low that he was scarcely audible.

"And with whom?"

"With whom can it be, if not with the Duke of —"

"The Duke of —"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the citizen, giving a still fainter intonation to his voice.

"But how do you know all this?"

"How do I know it?"

"Yes, how do you know it? No half-confidence, or — you understand!"

"I know it from my wife, Monsieur, — from my wife herself."

"Who learns it from whom?"

"From M. Laporte. Did I not tell you that she was the goddaughter of M. Laporte, the confidential man of the queen? Well, M. Laporte placed her near her Majesty in order that our poor queen might at least have some one in whom she could place confidence, abandoned as she is by the king, watched as she is by the cardinal, betrayed as she is by everybody."

"Ah, ah! it begins to develop itself," said D'Artagnan.

"Now, my wife came home four days ago, Monsieur. One of her conditions was that she should come and see

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me twice a week; for, as I had the honor to tell you, my wife loves me dearly, — my wife, then, came and confided to me that the queen at that very moment entertained great fears."

"Truly!"

"Yes. The cardinal, as it appears, pursues her and persecutes her more than ever. He cannot pardon her the history of the Saraband. You know the history of the Saraband?"

"*Pardieu!* know it!" replied D'Artagnan, who knew nothing about it, but who wished to appear to know everything that was going on.

"So that now it is no longer hatred, but vengeance."

"Indeed!"

"And the queen believes — "

"Well, what does the queen believe?"

"She believes that some one has written to the Duke of Buckingham in her name."

"In the queen's name?"

"Yes, to make him come to Paris; and when once come to Paris, to draw him into some snare."

"The devil! But your wife, Monsieur, what has she to do with all this?"

"Her devotion to the queen is known; and they wish either to remove her from her mistress, or to intimidate her, in order to obtain her Majesty's secrets, or to seduce her and make use of her as a spy."

"That is likely," said D'Artagnan; "but the man who has abducted her, — do you know him?"

"I have told you that I believe I know him."

"His name?"

"I do not know that; what I do know is that he is a creature of the cardinal, his evil genius."

"But you have seen him?"

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"Yes, my wife pointed him out to me one day."

"Has he anything remarkable about him by which one may recognize him?"

"Oh, certainly; he is a noble of very lofty carriage, black hair, swarthy complexion, piercing eye, white teeth, and has a scar on his temple."

"A scar on his temple," cried D'Artagnan; "and with that, white teeth, a piercing eye, dark complexion, black hair, and haughty carriage, — why, that's my man of Meung."

"He is your man, do you say?"

"Yes, yes; but that has nothing to do with it. No, I am wrong. On the contrary, that simplifies the matter greatly. If your man is mine, with one blow I shall obtain two revenges, that's all; but where to find this man?"

"I know not."

"Have you no information as to his abiding-place?"

"None. One day, as I was conveying my wife back to the Louvre, he was coming out as she was going in, and she showed him to me."

"The devil! the devil!" murmured D'Artagnan; "all this is vague enough. From whom have you learned the abduction of your wife?"

"From M. Laporte."

"Did he give you any details?"

"He knew none himself."

"And you have learned nothing from any other quarter?"

"Yes, I have received — "

"What?"

"I fear I am committing a great imprudence."

"You always come back to that; but I must make you see this time that it is too late to retreat."

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"I do not retreat, *mordieu!*" cried the citizen, swearing in order to rouse his courage. "Besides, by the faith of Bonacieux —"

"You call yourself Bonacieux?" interrupted D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that is my name."

"You said, then, by the word of Bonacieux. Pardon me for interrupting you, but it appears to me that that name is familiar to me."

"Possibly, Monsieur. I am your landlord."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan, half rising and bowing; "you are my landlord?"

"Yes, Monsieur, yes. And as it is three months since you have been here, and though, distracted as you must be in your important occupations, you have forgotten to pay me my rent, — as, I say, I have not tormented you a single instant, I thought you would appreciate my delicacy."

"How can it be otherwise, my dear Bonacieux?" replied D'Artagnan; "trust me, I am fully grateful for such unparalleled conduct, and if, as I have told you, I can be of any service to you —"

"I believe you, Monsieur, I believe you; and as I was about to say, by the word of Bonacieux, I have confidence in you."

"Finish, then, what you were about to say."

The citizen took a paper from his pocket, and presented it to D'Artagnan.

"A letter?" said the young man.

"Which I received this morning."

D'Artagnan opened it, and as the day was beginning to decline, he approached the window to read it. The citizen followed him.

"'Do not seek your wife,'" read D'Artagnan; "'she will be restored to you when there is no longer occasion

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for her. If you make a single step to find her you are lost.'

"That 's pretty positive," continued D'Artagnan; "but after all, it is but a menace."

"Yes; but that menace terrifies me. I am not a fighting man at all, Monsieur, and I am afraid of the Bastille."

"Hum!" said D'Artagnan. "I have no greater regard for the Bastille than you. If it were nothing but a sword-thrust, why then —"

"I have counted upon you on this occasion, Monsieur."

"Yes?"

"Seeing you constantly surrounded by musketeers of a very superb appearance, and knowing that these musketeers belonged to M. de Tréville, and were consequently enemies of the cardinal, I thought that you and your friends, while rendering justice to our poor queen, would be enchanted to play his Eminence an ill turn."

"Without doubt."

"And then I have thought that considering three months' lodging, about which I have said nothing —"

"Yes, yes; you have already given me that reason, and I find it excellent."

"Reckoning still further, that as long as you do me the honor to remain in my house I shall never speak to you about rent —"

"Very well!"

"And adding to this, if there be need of it, meaning to offer you fifty pistoles, if, against all probability, you should be short at the present moment."

"Admirable! you are rich then, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux?"

"I am comfortably off, Monsieur, that 's all; I have scraped together some such thing as an income of two or

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three thousand crowns in the haberdashery business, but more particularly in venturing some funds in the last voyage of the celebrated navigator, Jean Moquet; so that you understand, Monsieur — But!" cried the citizen.

"What!" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Whom do I see yonder?"

"Where?"

"In the street, facing your window, in the embrasure of that door, — a man wrapped in a cloak."

"It is he!" cried D'Artagnan and the citizen at the same time, each having recognized his man.

"Ah, this time," cried D'Artagnan, springing to his sword, — "this time he will not escape me!"

Drawing his sword from its scabbard, he rushed out of the appartement. On the staircase he met Athos and Porthos, who were coming to see him. They separated, and D'Artagnan rushed between them like a dart.

"Pah! where are you going?" cried the two musketeers in a breath.

"The man of Meung!" replied D'Artagnan, and disappeared.

D'Artagnan had more than once related to his friends his adventure with the unknown, as well as the apparition of the beautiful foreigner, to whom this man had confided some important missive.

The opinion of Athos was that D'Artagnan had lost his letter in the skirmish. A gentleman, in his opinion, — and according to D'Artagnan's portrait of him, the unknown must be a gentleman, — a gentleman would be incapable of the baseness of stealing a letter.

Porthos saw nothing in all this but a love-meeting, given by a lady to a cavalier, or by a cavalier to a lady, which had been disturbed by the presence of D'Artagnan and his yellow horse.

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Aramis said that as these sorts of affairs were mysterious, it was better not to fathom them.

They understood, then, from the few words which escaped from D'Artagnan, what affair was in hand, and as they thought that after overtaking his man, or losing sight of him, D'Artagnan would return to his rooms, they kept on their way.

When they entered D'Artagnan's chamber, it was empty; the landlord, dreading the consequences of the encounter which was doubtless about to take place between the young man and the unknown, had, consistently with the character he had given himself, judged it prudent to decamp.

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CHAPTER IX.

D'ARTAGNAN SHOWS HIMSELF.

As Athos and Porthos had foreseen, at the expiration of a half-hour D'Artagnan returned. He had again missed his man, who had disappeared as if by enchantment. D'Artagnan had run, sword in hand, through all the neighboring streets, but had found nobody resembling the man he sought for. Then he came back to the point where, perhaps, he ought to have begun, and that was to knock at the door against which the unknown had leaned; but this proved useless, — for though he knocked ten or twelve times in succession, no one answered, and some of the neighbors, who put their noses out of their windows, or were brought to their doors by the noise, had assured him that that house, all the openings of which were tightly closed, had not been inhabited for six months.

While D'Artagnan was running through the streets and knocking at doors, Aramis had joined his companions; so that on returning home D'Artagnan found the reunion complete.

"Well!" cried the three musketeers all together, on seeing D'Artagnan enter with his brow covered with perspiration, and his countenance upset with anger.

"Well!" cried he, throwing his sword upon the bed, "this man must be the Devil in person; he has disappeared like a phantom, like a shade, like a spectre."

"Do you believe in apparitions?" asked Athos of Porthos.

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"I never believe in anything I have not seen, and as I never have seen apparitions, I don't believe in them."

"The Bible," said Aramis, "makes our belief in them a law; the ghost of Samuel appeared to Saul, and it is an article of faith that I should be very sorry to see any doubt thrown upon, Porthos."

"At all events, man or devil, body or shadow, illusion or reality, this man is born for my damnation; for his flight has caused us to miss a glorious affair, gentlemen, — an affair by which there were a hundred pistoles, and perhaps more, to be gained."

"How is that?" cried Porthos and Aramis in a breath.

As to Athos, faithful to his system of reticence, he contented himself with interrogating D'Artagnan by a look.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan to his domestic, who just then insinuated his head through the half-open door in order to catch some fragments of the conversation, "go down to my landlord, M. Bonacieux, and ask him to send me half-a-dozen bottles of Beaugency wine; I prefer that."

"Ah, ha! you have credit with your landlord, then?" asked Porthos.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "from this very day; and mind, if the wine is bad, we will send to him to find better."

"We must use, and not abuse," said Aramis, sententiously.

"I always said that D'Artagnan had the longest head of the four," said Athos, who, having uttered his opinion, to which D'Artagnan replied with a bow, immediately resumed his accustomed silence.

"But, come, what is this about?" asked Porthos.

"Yes," said Aramis, "impart it to us, my dear friend, unless the honor of any lady be hazarded by this con-

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fidence; in that case you would do better to keep it to yourself."

"Be satisfied," replied D'Artagnan; "the honor of no one will have cause to complain of what I have to tell."

He then related to his friends, word for word, all that had passed between him and his host, and how the man who had abducted the wife of his worthy landlord was the same with whom he had the difference at the hostelry of the Jolly Miller.

"Your affair is not bad," said Athos, after having tasted like a connoisseur, and indicated by a nod of his head that he thought the wine good; "and one may draw fifty or sixty pistoles from this good man. Then there only remains to ascertain whether these fifty or sixty pistoles are worth the risk of four heads."

"But observe," cried D'Artagnan, "that there is a woman in the affair, — a woman carried off, a woman who is doubtless threatened, tortured perhaps, and all because she is faithful to her mistress."

"Beware, D'Artagnan, beware," said Aramis. "You grow a little too warm, in my opinion, about the fate of Madame Bonacieux. Woman was created for our destruction, and it is from her we inherit all our miseries."

At this speech of Aramis the brow of Athos became clouded, and he bit his lips.

"It is not Madame Bonacieux about whom I am anxious," cried D'Artagnan, "but the queen, whom the king abandons, whom the cardinal persecutes, and who sees the heads of all her friends fall one after the other."

"Why does she love what we hate most in the world, the Spaniards and the English?"

"Spain is her country," replied D'Artagnan; "and it is very natural that she should love the Spanish, who are

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the children of the same soil as herself. As to the second reproach, I have heard it said that she does not love the English, but an Englishman."

"Well, and by my faith," said Athos, "it must be acknowledged that this Englishman is worthy of being loved. I never saw a man with a nobler air than his."

"Without reckoning that he dresses as nobody else can," said Porthos. "I was at the Louvre on the day when he scattered his pearls; and, *pardieu*, I picked up two that I sold for ten pistoles each. Do you know him, Aramis?"

"As well as you do, gentlemen; for I was among those who arrested him in the garden at Amiens, into which M. Putange, the queen's equerry, introduced me. I was in the seminary at the time, and the adventure appeared to me to be cruel for the king."

"Which would not prevent me," said D'Artagnan, "if I knew where the Duke of Buckingham was, from taking him by the hand, and conducting him to the queen, were it only to enrage the cardinal. For our true, our only, our eternal enemy, gentlemen, is the cardinal, and if we could find means to play him a sharp turn, I vow that I would voluntarily risk my head in doing it."

"And did the mercer," rejoined Athos, "tell you, D'Artagnan, that the queen thought that Buckingham had been brought over by a forged letter?"

"She is afraid so."

"Wait a minute, then," said Aramis.

"What for?" demanded Porthos.

"Go on, while I endeavor to recall certain circumstances."

"And now I am convinced," said D'Artagnan, "that this abduction of the queen's woman is connected with the events of which we are speaking, and perhaps with the presence of Buckingham in Paris."

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"The Gascon is full of ideas," said Porthos, with admiration.

"I like to hear him talk," said Athos; "his dialect amuses me."

"Gentlemen," cried Aramis, "listen to this."

"Listen to Aramis," said his three friends.

"Yesterday I was at the house of a doctor of theology, whom I sometimes consult about my studies."

Athos smiled.

"He resides in a quiet quarter," continued Aramis; "his tastes and his profession require it. Now, at the moment when I left his house —"

Here Aramis paused.

"Well," cried his auditors; "at the moment you left his house?"

Aramis appeared to make a strong inward effort, like a man who, in the full relation of a falsehood, finds himself stopped by some unforeseen obstacle; but the eyes of his three companions were fixed upon him, their ears were wide open, and there were no means of retreat.

"This doctor has a niece," continued Aramis.

"Ah, he has a niece!" interrupted Porthos.

"A very respectable lady," said Aramis.

The three friends burst into laughter.

"Ah, if you laugh, if you doubt me," replied Aramis, "you shall know nothing."

"We believe like Mahometans, and are as mute as tombstones," said Athos.

"I will continue, then," resumed Aramis. "This niece comes sometimes to see her uncle; and by chance was there yesterday at the same time that I was, and it was my duty to offer to conduct her to her carriage."

"Ah! She has a carriage then, this niece of the doctor?" interrupted Porthos, one of whose faults was

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a great looseness of tongue. "A nice acquaintance, my friend!"

"Porthos," replied Aramis, "I have had occasion to observe to you more than once that you are very indiscreet; and that is injurious to you among the women."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," cried D'Artagnan, who began to get a glimpse of the result of the adventure, "the thing is serious. Let us try not to jest, if we can. Go on, Aramis, go on."

"All at once, a tall, dark gentleman, — just like yours, D'Artagnan."

"The same, perhaps," said he.

"Possibly," continued Aramis, — "came towards me, accompanied by five or six men who followed about ten paces behind him; and in the politest tone, 'Monsieur Duke,' said he to me, 'and you, Madame,' continued he, addressing the lady on my arm, —"

"The doctor's niece?"

"Hold your tongue, Porthos," said Athos; "you are insupportable."

"'— will you enter this carriage, and that without offering the least resistance, without making the least noise?'"

"He took you for Buckingham!" cried D'Artagnan.

"I believe so," replied Aramis.

"But the lady?" asked Porthos.

"He took her for the queen!" said D'Artagnan.

"Just so," replied Aramis.

"The Gascon is the Devil!" cried Athos; "nothing escapes him."

"The fact is," said Porthos, "Aramis is of the same height, and something of the shape of the duke; but it nevertheless appears to me that the dress of a musketeer —"

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"I wore an enormous cloak," said Aramis.

"In the month of July? the devil!" said Porthos. "Is the doctor afraid that you may be recognized?"

"I can comprehend that the spy may have been deceived by the person; but the face —"

"I had a large hat," said Aramis.

"Oh, good Lord," cried Porthos, "what precautions for the study of theology!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "do not let us lose our time in jesting. Let us separate, and let us seek the mercer's wife, — that is the key of the intrigue."

"A woman of such inferior condition! Can you believe so?" said Porthos, protruding his lips with contempt.

"She is goddaughter to Laporte, the confidential valet of the queen. Have I not told you so, gentlemen? Besides, it has perhaps been her Majesty's calculation to seek on this occasion for support so lowly. High heads expose themselves from afar, and the cardinal is long-sighted."

"Well," said Porthos, "in the first place make a bargain with the mercer, and a good bargain."

"That's useless," said D'Artagnan; "for I believe if he does not pay us, we shall be well enough paid by another party."

At this moment a sudden noise of footsteps was heard upon the stairs; the door was thrown violently open, and the unfortunate mercer rushed into the chamber in which the council was held.

"Save me, gentlemen, for the love of heaven, save me!" cried he. "There are four men come to arrest me. Save me! save me!"

Porthos and Aramis arose.

"A moment," cried D'Artagnan, making them a sign

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to replace in the scabbard their half-drawn swords. "It is not courage that is needed; it is prudence."

"And yet," cried Porthos, "we will not leave —"

"You will leave D'Artagnan to act as he thinks proper," said Athos. "He has, I repeat, the longest head of the four, and for my part I declare that I will obey him. Do as you think best, D'Artagnan."

At this moment the four guards appeared at the door of the antechamber, but seeing four musketeers standing, and their swords by their sides, they hesitated about going farther.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in," called D'Artagnan; "you are here in my appartement, and we are all faithful servants of the king and cardinal."

"Then, gentlemen, you will not oppose our executing the orders we have received?" asked one who appeared to be the leader of the party.

"On the contrary, gentlemen, we would assist you if it were necessary."

"What does he say?" grumbled Porthos.

"You are a simpleton," said Athos. "Silence!"

"But you promised me —" whispered the poor mercer.

"We can only save you by being free ourselves," replied D'Artagnan, in a rapid, low tone; "and if we appear inclined to defend you, they will arrest us with you."

"It seems, nevertheless —"

"Come, gentlemen, come!" said D'Artagnan, aloud; "I have no motive for defending Monsieur. I saw him to-day for the first time, and he can tell you on what occasion; he came to demand the rent of my lodging. Is not that true, M. Bonacieux? Answer!"

"That is the very truth," cried the mercer; "but Monsieur does not tell you —"

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"Silence, with respect to me; silence, with respect to my friends; silence about the queen, above all, or you will ruin everybody without saving yourself! Come, come, gentlemen, remove the fellow." And D'Artagnan pushed the half-stupefied mercer among the guards, saying to him, "You are a shabby old fellow, my dear. You come to demand money of me, — of a musketeer! To prison with him! Gentlemen, once more, take him to prison, and keep him under key as long as possible; that will give me time to pay him."

The officers were full of thanks, and took away their prey. As they were going down D'Artagnan laid his hand on the shoulder of their leader.

"May I not drink to your health, and you to mine?" said D'Artagnan, filling two glasses with the Beaugency wine which he had obtained from the liberality of M. Bonacieux.

"That will do me great honor," said the leader of the posse, "and I accept thankfully."

"Then to yours, Monsieur — what is your name?"

"Boisrenard."

"M. Boisrenard."

"To yours, my gentleman! What is your name, in your turn, if you please?"

"D'Artagnan."

"To yours, Monsieur."

"And above all others," cried D'Artagnan, as if carried away by his enthusiasm, "to that of the king and the cardinal."

The leader of the posse would perhaps have doubted the sincerity of D'Artagnan if the wine had been bad; but the wine was good, and he was convinced.

"What diabolical villany you have performed here," said Porthos, when the officer had rejoined his com-

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panions, and the four friends found themselves alone. "Shame, shame, for four musketeers to allow an unfortunate fellow who cried for help to be arrested in their midst! And a gentleman to hobnob with a bailiff!"

"Porthos," said Aramis, "Athos has already told you that you are a simpleton, and I am quite of his opinion. D'Artagnan, you are a great man; and when you occupy M. de Tréville's place, I will come and ask your influence to secure me an abbey."

"Well, I am in a maze," said Porthos; "do *you* approve of what D'Artagnan has done?"

"*Parbleu!* indeed I do," said Athos; "I not only approve of what he has done, but I congratulate him upon it."

"And now, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, without stopping to explain his conduct to Porthos, "All for one, one for all, — that is our motto, is it not?"

"And yet — " said Porthos.

"Hold out your hand and swear!" cried Athos and Aramis at once.

Overcome by example, grumbling to himself, nevertheless, Porthos stretched out his hand, and the four friends repeated with one voice the formula dictated by D'Artagnan: —

"All for one, one for all."

"That 's well! Now let every one retire to his own home," said D'Artagnan, as if he had done nothing but command all his life; "and attention! for from this moment we are at feud with the cardinal."

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CHAPTER X.

A MOUSE-TRAP IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

The invention of the mouse-trap does not date from our days; as soon as societies, in forming, had invented any kind of police, that police invented mouse-traps.

As perhaps our readers are not familiar with the slang of the Rue de Jerusalem, and as it is fifteen years since we applied this word for the first time to this thing, allow us to explain to them what is a mouse-trap.

When in a house, of whatever kind it may be, an individual suspected of any crime be arrested, the arrest is held secret. Four or five men are placed in ambuscade in the first room. The door is opened to all who knock. It is closed after them, and they are arrested; so that at the end of two or three days they have in their power almost all the *habitués* of the establishment. And that is a mouse-trap.

The appartement of M. Bonacieux then became a mouse-trap; and whoever appeared there was taken and interrogated by the cardinal's people. It must be observed that as a separate passage led to the first floor, in which D'Artagnan lodged, those who called to see him were exempted from this detention.

Besides, nobody came thither but the three musketeers; they had all been engaged in earnest search and inquiries, but had discovered nothing. Athos had even gone so far as to question M. de Tréville, — a thing which, considering the habitual reticence of the worthy musketeer, had very

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much astonished his captain. But M. de Tréville knew nothing, except that the last time he had seen the cardinal, the king, and the queen, the cardinal looked very thoughtful, the king uneasy, and the redness of the queen's eyes denoted that she had been sleepless or tearful. But this last circumstance was not striking, as the queen since her marriage watched and wept much.

M. de Tréville requested Athos, whatever might happen, to be observant of his duty to the king, but more particularly to the queen, begging him to convey his desires to his comrades.

As to D'Artagnan, he did not budge from his appartement. He converted his chamber into an observatory. From his windows he saw all the visitors who were caught. Then, having removed a plank from his floor, and nothing remaining but a simple ceiling between him and the room beneath, in which the interrogatories were made, he heard all that passed between the inquisitors and the accused.

The interrogatories, preceded by a minute search operated upon the persons arrested, were almost always framed thus: "Has Madame Bonacieux sent anything to you for her husband, or any other person? Has M. Bonacieux sent anything to you for his wife, or for any other person? Has either of them confided anything to you by word of mouth?"

"If they knew anything, they would not question people in this manner," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Now, what is it they want to know? Why, if the Duke of Buckingham is in Paris, and if he has not had, or is not likely to have, an interview with the queen."

D'Artagnan held on to this idea, which, from what he heard, was not wanting in probability.

In the mean time, the mouse-trap continued in operation, and likewise D'Artagnan's vigilance.

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On the evening of the day after the arrest of poor Bonacieux, as Athos had just left D'Artagnan to report at M. de Tréville's, as nine o'clock had just struck, and as Planchet, who had not yet made the bed, was beginning his task, a knocking was heard at the street-door. The door was instantly opened and shut; some one was taken in the mouse-trap.

D'Artagnan flew to his hole, laid himself down on the floor at full length, and listened.

Cries were soon heard, and then moans, which some one appeared to be endeavoring to stifle. There were no questions.

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan to himself. "It seems like a woman! They search her; she resists; they use force, — the scoundrels!"

In spite of his prudence, D'Artagnan restrained himself with great difficulty from taking a part in the scene that was going on below.

"But I tell you that I am the mistress of the house, gentlemen! I tell you I am Madame Bonacieux; I tell you I belong to the queen!" cried the unfortunate woman.

"Madame Bonacieux!" murmured D'Artagnan. "Can I be so lucky as to find what everybody is seeking for?"

The voice became more and more indistinct; a tumultuous movement shook the partition. The victim resisted as much as a woman could resist four men.

"Pardon, gentlemen, — par —" murmured the voice, which could now be only heard in inarticulate sounds.

"They are binding her; they are going to drag her away," cried D'Artagnan to himself, springing up from the floor. "My sword! good, it is by my side! Planchet!"

"Monsieur."

"Run and seek Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. One of

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the three will certainly be at home, perhaps all three. Tell them to take arms, to come here, and to run! Ah, I remember, Athos is at M. de Tréville's."

"But where are you going, Monsieur, where are you going?"

"I am going down by the window, in order to be there the sooner," cried D'Artagnan. "You put back the boards, sweep the floor, go out at the door, and run as I told you."

"Oh, Monsieur! Monsieur! you will kill yourself," cried Planchet.

"Hold your tongue, stupid fellow," said D'Artagnan; and laying hold of the casement, he let himself gently down from the first story, which fortunately was not very elevated, without doing himself the slightest injury.

He then went straight to the door and knocked, murmuring, "I will go myself and be caught in the mouse-trap, but woe be to the cats that shall pounce upon such a mouse!"

The knocker had scarcely sounded under the hand of the young man before the tumult ceased, steps approached, the door was opened, and D'Artagnan, sword in hand, rushed into the rooms of M. Bonacieux, the door of which, doubtless acted upon by a spring, closed after him.

Then those who dwelt in Bonacieux's unfortunate house, together with the nearest neighbors, heard loud cries, stamping of feet, clashing of swords, and breaking of furniture. A moment after, those who, surprised by this tumult, had gone to their windows to learn the cause of it, saw the door open, and four men, clothed in black, not *come* out of it, but *fly*, like so many frightened crows, leaving on the ground and on the corners of the furniture, feathers from their wings; that is to say, patches of their clothes and fragments of their cloaks.

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D'Artagnan was conqueror, — without much effort, it must be confessed, for only one of the officers was armed, and even he defended himself for form's sake. It is true that the three others had endeavored to knock the young man down with chairs, stools, and crockery; but two or three scratches made by the Gascon's blade terrified them. Ten minutes sufficed for their defeat, and D'Artagnan remained master of the field of battle.

The neighbors, who had opened their windows, with that coolness peculiar to the inhabitants of Paris in these times of perpetual riots and disturbances, closed them again as soon as they saw the four men in black flee, — their instinct telling them that for the time all was over. Besides, it began to grow late, and then, as to-day, people went to bed early in the quarter of the Luxembourg.

On being left alone with Madame Bonacieux, D'Artagnan turned towards her; the poor woman reclined where she had been left, half-fainting upon an arm-chair. D'Artagnan examined her with a rapid glance.

She was a charming woman of twenty-five or twenty-six years, with dark hair, blue eyes, and a nose slightly turned up, admirable teeth, and a complexion marbled with rose and opal. There, however, ended the signs which might have confounded her with a lady of rank. The hands were white, but without delicacy; the feet did not bespeak the woman of quality. Happily, D'Artagnan was not yet acquainted with such niceties.

While D'Artagnan was examining Madame Bonacieux, and was, as we have said, close to her, he saw on the ground a fine cambric handkerchief, which he picked up, as was his habit, and at the corner of which he recognized the same cipher he had seen on the handkerchief which had nearly caused him and Aramis to cut each other's throats.

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From that time, D'Artagnan had been cautious with respect to handkerchiefs with arms on them, and he therefore placed in the pocket of Madame Bonacieux the one he had just picked up.

At that moment Madame Bonacieux recovered her senses. She opened her eyes, looked around her with terror, saw that the appartement was empty, and that she was alone with her liberator. She extended her hands to him with a smile. Madame Bonacieux had the sweetest smile in the world.

"Ah, Monsieur!" said she, "you have saved me; permit me to thank you."

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, "I have only done what every gentleman would have done in my place; you owe me no thanks."

"Oh, yes, Monsieur, oh, yes; and I hope to prove to you that you have not served an ingrate. But what could these men, whom I at first took for robbers, want with me, and why is M. Bonacieux not here?"

"Madame, those men were much more dangerous than any robbers could have been, for they are the agents of the cardinal; and as to your husband, M. Bonacieux, he is not here because he was yesterday evening conducted to the Bastille."

"My husband in the Bastille!" cried Madame Bonacieux. "Oh, my God! what has he done? Poor dear man, he is innocence itself!"

And something like a faint smile lighted the still terrified features of the young woman.

"What has he done, Madame?" said D'Artagnan. "I believe that his only crime is to have at the same time the good fortune and the misfortune to be your husband."

"But, Monsieur, you know then —"

"I know that you have been abducted, Madame."

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"And by whom? Do you know him? Oh, if you know him, tell me!"

"By a man of from forty to forty-five years, with black hair, a dark complexion, and a scar on his left temple."

"That is he, that is he; but his name?"

"Ah, his name? I do not know that."

"And did my husband know I had been carried off?"

"He was informed of it by a letter, written to him by the abductor himself."

"And does he suspect," said Madame Bonacieux, with some embarrassment, "the cause of this event?"

"He attributed it, I believe, to a political cause."

"I misdoubted from the first; and now I think entirely as he does. Then my dear M. Bonacieux has not suspected me a single instant?"

"So far from it, Madame, he was too proud of your virtue, and above all, of your love."

A second smile, almost imperceptible, stole over the rosy lips of the pretty young woman.

"But," continued D'Artagnan, "how did you escape?"

"I took advantage of a moment when they left me alone; and as I had known since morning the reason of my abduction, with the help of the sheets I let myself down from the window. Then, as I believed my husband would be at home, I hastened hither."

"To place yourself under his protection?"

"Oh, no, poor dear man! I knew very well that he was incapable of defending me; but as he could serve us in other ways, I wished to inform him."

"Of what?"

"Oh, that is not my secret; I must not, therefore, tell you."

"Besides," said D'Artagnan, — "pardon me, Madame, if, guardsman as I am, I remind you of prudence, —

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besides, I believe we are not here in a very proper place for imparting confidences. The men I have put to flight will return reinforced; if they find us here, we are lost. I have sent for three of my friends, but who knows whether they were at home?"

"Yes, yes! you are right," cried the affrighted Madame Bonacieux; "let us fly! let us save ourselves."

At these words she passed her arm under that of D'Artagnan, and urged him forward eagerly.

"But whither shall we fly, — whither escape?"

"Let us first withdraw from this house; afterwards we shall see."

The young woman and the young man, without taking the trouble to shut the door after them, descended the Rue des Fossoyeurs rapidly, turned into the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince, and did not stop till they came to the Place St. Sulpice.

"And now what are we to do, and where do you wish me to conduct you?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I am quite at a loss how to answer you, I admit," said Madame Bonacieux. "My intention was to inform M. Laporte, through my husband, in order that M. Laporte might tell us precisely what has taken place at the Louvre in the last three days, and whether there is any danger in presenting myself there."

"But I," said D'Artagnan, "can go and inform M. Laporte."

"No doubt you could, only there is one misfortune, and that is that M. Bonacieux is known at the Louvre, and would be allowed to pass; whereas you are not known there, and the gate would be closed against you."

"Ah, bah!" said D'Artagnan; "you have at some wicket of the Louvre a *concierge* who is devoted to you, and who, thanks to a pass-word, would —"

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Madame Bonacieux looked earnestly at the young man.

"And if I give you this pass-word," said she, "would you forget it as soon as you had used it?"

"By my honor, by the faith of a gentleman!" said D'Artagnan, with an accent so truthful that no one could mistake it.

"Then I believe you. You appear to be a brave young man; besides, your fortune may perhaps be the result of your devotedness."

"I will do, without a promise and conscientiously, all that I can do to serve the king and be agreeable to the queen. Dispose of me, then, as a friend."

"But I, — where shall I go meanwhile?"

"Is there nobody from whose house M. Laporte can come and fetch you?"

"No, I can trust nobody."

"Stop," said D'Artagnan; "we are near Athos's door. Yes, here it is."

"Who is this Athos?"

"One of my friends."

"But if he should be at home, and see me?"

"He is not at home, and I will carry away the key, after having placed you in his appartement."

"But if he should return?"

"Oh, he won't return; and if he should, he will be told that I have brought a woman with me, and that woman is in his appartement."

"But that will compromise me sadly, you know."

"Of what consequence? Nobody knows you. Besides, we are in a situation to overlook ceremony."

"Come, then, let us go to your friend's house. Where does he live?"

"Rue Férou, two steps from here."

"Let us go!"

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Both resumed their way. As D'Artagnan had foreseen, Athos was not within. He took the key, which was customarily given him as one of the family, ascended the stairs, and introduced Madame Bonacieux into the little appartement of which we have given a description.

"You are at home," said he. "Remain here, fasten the door inside, and open it to nobody unless you hear three taps, like this;" and he tapped thrice, — two taps close together and pretty hard, the other after an interval, and lighter.

"That is well," said Madame Bonacieux. "Now, in my turn, let me give you my instructions."

"I am all attention."

"Present yourself at the wicket of the Louvre, on the side of the Rue de l'Échelle, and ask for Germain."

"Well, and then?"

"He will ask you what you want, and you will answer by these two words, 'Tours' and 'Bruxelles.' He will at once put himself at your orders."

"And what shall I command him?"

"To go and fetch M. Laporte, the queen's *valet de chambre*."

"And when he shall have found him, and M. Laporte is come?"

"You will send him to me."

"That is well; but where and how shall I see you again?"

"Do you much wish to see me again?"

"Certainly."

"Well, let that care be mine, and be at ease."

"I depend upon your word."

"You may."

D'Artagnan bowed to Madame Bonacieux, darting at her the most loving glance that he could possibly con-

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centrate upon her charming little person; and while he descended the stairs, he heard the door closed and double-locked. In two bounds he was at the Louvre; as he entered the wicket of L'Échelle, ten o'clock struck. All the events we have described had taken place within a half-hour.

Everything fell out as Madame Bonacieux prophesied. On hearing the pass-word, Germain bowed. In a few minutes Laporte was at the lodge; in two words D'Artagnan informed him where Madame Bonacieux was. Laporte assured himself, by having it twice repeated, of the accurate address, and set off at a run. Hardly, however, had he taken ten steps before he returned.

"Young man," said he to D'Artagnan, "a suggestion."

"What?"

"You may get into trouble by what has taken place."

"You believe so?"

"Yes. Have you any friend whose clock is too slow?"

"Well?"

"Go and call upon him, in order that he may give evidence of your having been with him at half-past nine. In a court of justice that is called an alibi."

D'Artagnan found this advice prudent. He took to his heels, and was soon at M. de Tréville's; but instead of going into the saloon with the rest of the crowd, he asked to be introduced to M. de Tréville's office. As D'Artagnan so constantly frequented the hôtel, no difficulty was made in complying with his request, and a servant went to inform M. de Tréville that his young compatriot, having something important to communicate, solicited a private audience. Five minutes after, M. de Tréville was asking D'Artagnan what he could do to serve him, and what caused his visit at so late an hour.

"Pardon me, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, who had

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profited by the moment he had been left alone to put back M. de Tréville's clock three quarters of an hour, "but I thought, as it was yet only twenty-five minutes past nine, it was not too late to wait upon you."

"Twenty-five minutes past nine!" cried M. de Tréville, looking at the clock; "why, that's impossible!"

"Look, rather, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "the clock shows it."

"That's true," said M. de Tréville; "I believed it later. But what can I do for you?"

Then D'Artagnan told M. de Tréville a long history about the queen. He expressed to him the fears he entertained with respect to her Majesty; he related to him what he had heard of the projects of the cardinal with regard to Buckingham, and all with a tranquillity and candor of which M. de Tréville was the more the dupe, from having himself, as we have said, observed something fresh between the cardinal, the king, and the queen.

As ten o'clock was striking, D'Artagnan left M. de Tréville, who thanked him for his information, recommended him to have the service of the king and queen always at heart, and returned to the saloon; but at the foot of the stairs, D'Artagnan remembered he had forgotten his cane. He consequently sprang up again, re-entered the office, with a turn of his finger set the clock right again, that it might not be perceived the next day that it had been put wrong, and certain from that time that he had a witness to prove his alibi, he ran downstairs and soon found himself in the street.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE INTRIGUE GROWS TANGLED.

His visit to M. de Tréville being paid, the pensive D'Artagnan took the longest way homewards.

On what was D'Artagnan thinking, that he strayed thus from his path, gazing at the stars of heaven, and sometimes sighing, sometimes smiling?

He was thinking of Madame Bonacieux. For an apprentice musketeer the young woman was almost an ideal of love. Pretty, mysterious, initiated in almost all the secrets of the court, which reflected such a charming gravity over her pleasing features, it might be surmised that she was not wholly unmoved; and this is an irresistible charm to novices in love. Moreover, D'Artagnan had delivered her from the hands of the demons who wished to search and ill-treat her; and this important service had established between them one of those sentiments of gratitude which so easily assume a more tender character.

D'Artagnan already fancied himself, so rapid is the flight of our dreams upon the wings of imagination, accosted by a messenger from the young woman, who brought him some billet appointing a meeting, a gold chain, or a diamond. We have observed that young cavaliers received presents from their king without shame. Let us add that in these times of lax morality they had no more delicacy with respect to their mistresses; and that the latter almost always left them valuable and durable remembrances, as if they essayed to conquer the

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fragility of their sentiments by the solidity of their gifts.

Without a blush men then made their way in the world by the means of women blushing. Such as were only beautiful gave their beauty, whence, without doubt, comes the proverb that "The most beautiful girl in the world can only give what she has." Such as were rich gave in addition a part of their money; and a vast number of heroes of that gallant period may be cited who would neither have won their spurs in the first place, nor their battles afterwards, without the purse, more or less furnished, which their mistress fastened to the saddle-bow.

D'Artagnan owned nothing. Provincial diffidence, that slight varnish, that ephemeral flower, that down of the peach, had evaporated to the winds through the little orthodox counsels which the three musketeers gave their friend. D'Artagnan, following the strange custom of the times, considered himself at Paris as on a campaign, neither more nor less than if he had been in Flanders, — Spain yonder, woman here. In each there was an enemy to contend with, and contributions to be levied.

But, we must say, at the present moment D'Artagnan was ruled by a feeling much more noble and disinterested. The mercer had said that he was rich; the young man might easily guess that with so weak a man as M. Bonacieux it must be the wife who kept the purse-key. But all this had no influence upon the feeling produced by the sight of Madame Bonacieux; and interest was almost foreign to this commencement of love, which had been the consequence of it. We say *almost*, for the idea that a young, handsome, kind, and witty woman is at the same time rich, takes nothing from the beginning of love, but on the contrary strengthens it.

There are in affluence a crowd of aristocratic cares and

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caprices which are highly becoming to beauty. A fine and white stocking, a silken robe, a lace kerchief, a pretty slipper on the foot, a tasty ribbon on the head, do not make an ugly woman pretty, but they make a pretty woman beautiful, without reckoning the hands, which gain by all this; the hands, among women particularly, to be beautiful must be idle.

Then D'Artagnan, as the reader, from whom we have not concealed the state of his fortune, very well knows, — D'Artagnan was not a millionnaire; he hoped to become one some day, but the time which in his own mind he fixed upon for this happy change was still far distant. In the mean while, how disheartening to see the woman one loves long for those thousands of nothings which constitute a woman's happiness, and be unable to give her those thousands of nothings. At least, when the woman is rich and the lover is not, that which he cannot offer she offers to herself; and although it is generally with her husband's money that she procures herself this indulgence, the gratitude for it seldom reverts to him.

Then D'Artagnan, disposed to become the most tender of lovers, was at the same time a very devoted friend. In the midst of his amorous projects for the mercer's wife, he did not forget his friends. The pretty Madame Bonacieux was just the woman to walk with in the Plaine St. Denis, or in the fair of St. Germain, in company with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, to whom D'Artagnan would be so proud to display such a conquest. Then, when people walk for any length of time they become hungry; D'Artagnan had often remarked this. Then one could enjoy charming little dinners, where one touches on one side the hand of a friend, and on the other the foot of a mistress. Besides, on pressing occasions, in extreme difficulties, D'Artagnan would become the preserver of his friends.

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And M. Bonacieux, whom D'Artagnan had pushed into the hands of the officers, denying him aloud, although he had promised in a whisper to save him? We are compelled to admit to our readers that D'Artagnan thought nothing about him in any way; or that, if he did think of him, it was only to say to himself that he was very well where he was, wherever it might be. Love is the most egotistic of all the passions.

Let our readers re-assure themselves. If D'Artagnan forgets his host, or appears to forget him, under the pretence of not knowing where he has been carried, we will not forget him, and we know where he is. But for the moment, let us do as did the amorous Gascon; we will see after the worthy mercer later.

D'Artagnan, reflecting on his future amours, addressing himself to the beautiful night, and smiling at the stars, re-ascended the Rue Cherche-Midi, or Chasse-Midi, as it was then called. As he found himself in the quarter in which Aramis lived, he took it into his head to pay his friend a visit, in order to explain the motives which had led him to send Planchet with a request that he would come instantly to the mouse-trap. Now, if Aramis had been at home when Planchet came to his abode, he had doubtless hastened to the Rue des Fossoyeurs, and finding nobody there but his other two companions perhaps, they would not be able to conceive what all this meant. This mystery required an explanation; at least, so D'Artagnan declared to himself.

He likewise thought this was an opportunity for talking about pretty little Madame Bonacieux, of whom his head, if not his heart, was already full. We must never look for discretion in first love. First love is accompanied by such excessive joy that unless this joy be allowed to overflow, it will stifle you.

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Paris for two hours past had been dark, and seemed a desert. Eleven o'clock sounded from all the clocks of the Faubourg St. Germain. It was delightful weather. D'Artagnan was passing along a lane on the spot where the Rue d'Assas is now situated, breathing the balmy emanations which were borne upon the wind from the Rue de Vaugirard, and which arose from the gardens refreshed by the dews of evening and the breeze of night. From a distance resounded, deadened, however, by good shutters, the songs of the tipplers, enjoying themselves in the cabarets scattered along the plain. Arrived at the end of the lane, D'Artagnan turned to the left. The house in which Aramis dwelt was situated between the Rue Cassette and the Rue Servandoni.

D'Artagnan had just passed the Rue Cassette, and already perceived the door of his friend's house, shaded by a mass of sycamores and clematis which formed a vast arch opposite the front of it, when he perceived something like a shadow issuing from the Rue Servandoni. This something was enveloped in a cloak, and D'Artagnan at first believed it was a man; but by the smallness of the form, the hesitation of the walk, and the indecision of the step, he soon discovered that it was a woman. Further, this woman, as if not certain of the house she was seeking, lifted up her eyes to look around her, stopped, went backwards, and then returned again. D'Artagnan was perplexed.

"Shall I go and offer her my services?" thought he. "By her step she must be young; perhaps she is pretty. Oh, yes! But a woman who wanders in the streets at this hour only ventures out to meet her lover. If I should disturb a rendezvous, that would not be the best means of commencing an acquaintance."

Meantime the young woman continued to advance,

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counting the houses and windows. This was neither long nor difficult. There were but three hôtels in this part of the street; and only two windows looking towards the road, one of which was in a pavilion parallel to that which Aramis occupied, the other belonging to Aramis himself.

"*Pardieu!*" said D'Artagnan to himself, to whose mind the niece of the theologian reverted, — "*pardieu*, it would be droll if this belated dove should be in search of our friend's house. But on my soul, it looks so. Ah, my dear Aramis, this time I shall find you out." And D'Artagnan, making himself as small as he could, concealed himself in the darkest side of the street near a stone bench placed at the back of a niche.

The young woman continued to advance; and in addition to the lightness of her step, which had betrayed her, she emitted a little cough which denoted a sweet voice. D'Artagnan believed this cough to be a signal.

Nevertheless, whether this cough had been answered by a similar signal which had fixed the irresolution of the nocturnal seeker, or whether without this aid she saw that she had arrived at the end of her journey, she resolutely drew near to Aramis's shutter, and tapped, at three equal intervals, with her bent finger.

"This is all very fine, dear Aramis," murmured D'Artagnan. "Ah, Monsieur hypocrite, I understand how you study theology."

The three blows were scarcely struck, when the inside blind was opened, and a light appeared through the panes of the outside shutter.

"Ah, ah!" said the listener, "not through doors, but through windows! Ah, this visit was expected. We shall see the windows open, and the lady enter by escalade. Very pretty!"

But to the great astonishment of D'Artagnan, the shutter

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remained closed. Still more, the light which had shone for an instant disappeared, and all was again in obscurity.

D'Artagnan thought this could not last long, and continued to look with all his eyes and listen with all his ears.

He was right; at the end of some seconds two sharp taps were heard inside. The young woman in the street replied by a single tap, and the shutter was opened a little way.

It may be judged whether D'Artagnan looked or listened with avidity. Unfortunately the light had been removed into another chamber; but the eyes of the young man were accustomed to the night. Besides, the eyes of Gascons have, as it is asserted, like those of cats, the faculty of seeing in the dark.

D'Artagnan then saw that the young woman took from her pocket a white object, which she unfolded quickly, and which took the form of a handkerchief. She made her interlocutor observe the corner of this unfolded object.

This immediately recalled to D'Artagnan's mind the handkerchief which he had found at the feet of Madame Bonacieux, which had reminded him of that which he had dragged from under the feet of Aramis.

"What the devil could that handkerchief signify?"

Placed where he was, D'Artagnan could not perceive the face of Aramis. We say Aramis, because the young man entertained no doubt that it was his friend who held this dialogue from the interior with the lady of the exterior. Curiosity prevailed over prudence; and profiting by the preoccupation into which the sight of the handkerchief appeared to have plunged the two personages now on the scene, he stole from his hiding-place, and quick as lightning, but stepping with utmost caution, he ran and placed himself close to the angle of the wall,

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from which his eye could pierce the interior of Aramis's room.

Upon gaining this advantage D'Artagnan was near uttering a cry of surprise; it was not Aramis who was conversing with the nocturnal visitor, it was a woman! D'Artagnan, however, could only see enough to recognize the form of her vestments, not enough to distinguish her features.

At the same instant the woman inside drew a second handkerchief from her pocket, and exchanged it for that which had just been shown to her. Then some words were spoken by the two women. At length the shutter closed. The woman who was outside the window turned round, and passed within four steps of D'Artagnan, pulling down the hood of her mantle; but the precaution was too late, D'Artagnan had already recognized Madame Bonacieux.

Madame Bonacieux! The suspicion that it was she had crossed the mind of D'Artagnan when she drew the handkerchief from her pocket; but what probability was there that Madame Bonacieux, who had sent for M. Laporte in order to be reconducted to the Louvre, should be running about the streets of Paris at half-past eleven at night, at the risk of being abducted a second time?

This must be, then, an affair of importance; and what is the important affair to a woman of twenty-five! Love.

But was it on her own account, or on account of another, that she exposed herself to such hazards? This was a question the young man asked himself, whom the demon of jealousy already gnawed, being in heart neither more nor less than an accepted lover.

There was a very simple means of satisfying himself whither Madame Bonacieux was going; that was to follow

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her. This method was so simple that D'Artagnan employed it quite naturally and instinctively.

But at the sight of the young man, who detached himself from the wall like a statue walking from its niche, and at the noise of the steps which she heard resound behind her, Madame Bonacieux uttered a little cry and fled.

D'Artagnan ran after her. It was not difficult for him to overtake a woman embarrassed with her cloak. He came up with her before she had traversed a third of the street. The unfortunate woman was exhausted, not by fatigue, but by terror, and when D'Artagnan placed his hand upon her shoulder, she sank upon one knee, crying in a choking voice, "Kill me, if you please, you shall know nothing!"

D'Artagnan raised her by passing his arm round her waist; but as he felt by her weight she was on the point of fainting, he made haste to re-assure her by protestations of devotedness. These protestations were nothing for Madame Bonacieux, for such protestations may be made with the worst intentions in the world; but the voice was all. Madame Bonacieux thought she recognized the sound of that voice; she re-opened her eyes, cast a quick glance upon the man who had terrified her so, and at once perceiving it was D'Artagnan, she uttered a cry of joy, "Oh, it is you, it is you! Thank God, thank God!"

"Yes, it is I," said D'Artagnan, "it is I, whom God has sent to watch over you."

"Was it with that intention you followed me?" asked the young woman, with a coquettish smile, whose somewhat bantering character resumed its influence, and with whom all fear had disappeared from the moment in which she recognized a friend in one she had taken for an enemy.

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"No," said D'Artagnan; "no, I confess it. It was chance that threw me in your way; I saw a woman knocking at the window of one of my friends."

"Of one of your friends?" interrupted Madame Bonacieux.

"Without doubt; Aramis is one of my best friends."

"Aramis! Who is he?"

"Come, come, you won't tell me you don't know Aramis?"

"This is the first time I ever heard his name pronounced."

"It is the first time, then, that you ever went to that house?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And you did not know that it was inhabited by a young man?"

"No."

"By a musketeer?"

"No, indeed!"

"It was not he, then, you came to seek?"

"Not the least in the world. Besides, you must have seen that the person to whom I spoke was a woman."

"That is true; but this woman is a friend of Aramis —"

"I know nothing of that."

"— since she lodges with him."

"That does not concern me."

"But who is she?"

"Oh, that is not my secret."

"My dear Madame Bonacieux, you are charming; but at the same time you are one of the most mysterious women."

"Do I lose by that?"

"No; you are, on the contrary, adorable."

"Give me your arm, then."

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"Most willingly. And now?"

"Now escort me."

"Where?"

"Where I am going."

"But where are you going?"

"You will see, because you will leave me at the door.'

"Shall I wait for you?"

"That will be useless."

"You will return alone, then?"

"Perhaps yes, perhaps no."

"But will the person who shall accompany you afterwards be a man or a woman?"

"I don't know yet."

"But I will know it!"

"How so?"

"I will wait till you come out."

"In that case, adieu."

"Why so?"

"I do not want you."

"But you have claimed —"

"The aid of a gentleman, not the watchfulness of a spy."

"The word is rather hard."

"How are they called who follow others in spite of them?"

"They are indiscreet."

"The word is too mild."

"Well, Madame, I perceive I must do as you wish."

"Why did you deprive yourself of the merit of doing so at once?"

"Is there no merit in repentance?"

"And you do really repent?"

"I know nothing about it myself. But what I know is, that I promise to do all you wish if you will allow me to accompany you where you are going."

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"And you will leave me then?"

"Yes."

"Without waiting for my coming out again?"

"Yes."

"Word of honor?"

"By the faith of a gentleman. Take my arm, and let us go."

D'Artagnan offered his arm to Madame Bonacieux, who willingly took it, half laughing, half trembling, and both gained the top of Rue de la Harpe. Arriving there the young woman seemed to hesitate, as she had before done in the Rue Vaugirard. She seemed, however, by certain signs, to recognize a door, and approaching that door, "And now, Monsieur," said she, "it is here I have business; a thousand thanks for your honorable company, which has saved me from all the dangers to which, alone, I was exposed. But the moment is come to keep your word; I have reached my destination."

"And you will have nothing to fear on your return?"

"I shall have nothing to fear but robbers."

"And is that nothing?"

"What could they take from me? I have not a penny about me."

"You forget that beautiful handkerchief with the coat-of-arms."

"What?"

"That which I found at your feet, and replaced in your pocket."

"Hold your tongue, imprudent man! Do you wish to destroy me?"

"You see very plainly that there is still danger for you, since a single word makes you tremble; and you confess that if that word were heard you would be ruined. Come, come, Madame!" cried D'Artagnan, seizing her hands, and

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surveying her with an ardent glance, — "come, be more generous. Confide in me. Have you not read in my eyes that there is nothing but devotion and sympathy in my heart?"

"Yes," replied Madame Bonacieux; "therefore, ask my own secrets, and I will reveal them to you; but those of others, — that is quite another thing."

"Very well," said D'Artagnan. "I shall discover them; as these secrets may have an influence over your life, these secrets must become mine."

"Beware of what you do!" cried the young woman, in a manner so serious as to make D'Artagnan start in spite of himself. "Oh, meddle in nothing which concerns me. Do not seek to assist me in that which I am accomplishing. This I ask of you in the name of the interest with which I inspire you, in the name of the service you have rendered me, and which I never shall forget while I have life. Rather place faith in what I tell you. Have no more concern about me; I exist no longer for you, any more than if you had never seen me."

"Must Aramis do as much as I, Madame?" said D'Artagnan, deeply piqued.

"This is the second or third time, Monsieur, that you have repeated that name, and yet I have told you that I do not know him."

"You do not know the man at whose shutter you have just knocked? Indeed, Madame, you believe me too credulous!"

"Confess, that it is for the sake of making me talk that you invent this story and create this personage."

"I invent nothing, Madame; I create nothing. I only speak the exact truth."

"And you say that one of your friends lives in that house?"

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"I say so, and I repeat it for the third time; that house is one inhabited by my friend, and that friend is Aramis."

"All this will be cleared up at a later period," murmured the young woman; "no, Monsieur, be silent."

"If you could see my heart," said D'Artagnan, "you would there read so much curiosity that you would pity me, and so much love that you would instantly satisfy my curiosity. We have nothing to fear from those who love us."

"You speak very suddenly of love, Monsieur," said the young woman, shaking her head.

"That is because love has come suddenly upon me, and for the first time; and because I am only twenty."

The young woman looked at him furtively.

"Listen; I am already upon the scent," resumed D'Artagnan. "About three months ago I was near having a duel with Aramis, concerning a handkerchief resembling the one you showed to the woman in his house, — for a handkerchief marked in the same manner, I am sure."

"Monsieur," said the young woman, "you weary me very much, I assure you, with your questions."

"But you, Madame, prudent as you are, think, if you were to be arrested with that handkerchief, and that handkerchief were to be seized, would you not be compromised?"

"In what way? The initials are only mine, — C. B., Constance Bonacieux."

"Or Camille de Bois-Tracy."

"Silence, Monsieur! once again, silence! Ah, since the dangers I incur on my own account cannot stop you, think of those you may yourself run!"

"Me?"

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"Yes; there is peril of imprisonment, risk of life in knowing me."

"Then I will not leave you."

"Monsieur!" said the young woman, supplicating him, and clasping her hands together, — "Monsieur, in the name of Heaven, by the honor of a soldier, by the courtesy of a gentleman, depart! There, there midnight sounds! That is the hour when I am expected."

"Madame," said the young man, bowing; "I can refuse nothing asked of me thus. Be content; I will depart."

"But you will not follow me; you will not watch me?"

"I will return home instantly."

"Ah, I was quite sure you were a good and brave young man," said Madame Bonacieux, holding out her hand to him, and placing the other upon the knocker of a little door almost hidden in the wall.

D'Artagnan seized the hand held out to him, and kissed it ardently.

"Ah! I wish I had never seen you!" cried D'Artagnan, with that ingenuous roughness which women often prefer to the affectations of politeness, because it betrays the depths of the thought, and proves that feeling prevails over reason.

"Well!" resumed Madame Bonacieux, in a voice almost caressing, and pressing the hand of D'Artagnan, who had not relinquished hers, — "well! I will not say as much as you do; what is lost for to-day may not be lost forever. Who knows, when I shall be some day at liberty, that I may not satisfy your curiosity?"

"And will you make the same promise to my love?" cried D'Artagnan, beside himself with joy.

"Oh, as to that, I do not engage myself. That depends upon the sentiments with which you may inspire me."

"Then, to-day, Madame —"

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"Oh, to-day, I am no further than gratitude."

"Ah! you are too charming," said D'Artagnan, sorrowfully; "and you abuse my love."

"No, I use your generosity, that's all. But be of good cheer; with certain people, everything comes round."

"Oh, you render me the happiest of men! Do not forget this evening, — do not forget that promise."

"Be satisfied. In the proper time and place I will remember everything. Now then, go, go, in the name of Heaven! I was expected at sharp midnight, and I am late."

"By five minutes."

"Yes; but in certain circumstances five minutes are five ages."

"When one loves."

"Well! and who told you I had no affair with a lover?"

"It is a man, then, who expects you?" cried D'Artagnan. "A man!"

"The discussion is going to begin again!" said Madame Bonacieux, with a half-smile which was not exempt from a tinge of impatience.

"No, no; I go, I depart! I believe in you, and I would have all the merit of my devotion, even if that devotion were stupidity. Adieu, Madame, adieu!"

And as if he only felt strength to detach himself by a violent effort from the hand he held, he sprang away, running, while Madame Bonacieux knocked, as at the shutter, three light and regular taps. When he had gained the angle of the street, he turned. The door had been opened, and shut again; the mercer's pretty wife had disappeared.

D'Artagnan pursued his way. He had given his word not to watch Madame Bonacieux, and if his life had de-

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pended upon the spot to which she was going, or upon the person who should accompany her, D'Artagnan would have returned home, since he had so promised. Five minutes later he was in the Rue des Fossoyeurs.

"Poor Athos!" said he; "he will never guess what all this means. He will have fallen asleep waiting for me, or else he will have returned home, where he will have learned that a woman had been there. A woman with Athos! After all," continued D'Artagnan, "there was certainly one with Aramis. All this is very strange; and I am curious to know how it will end."

"Badly, Monsieur, badly!" replied a voice which the young man recognized as that of Planchet; for, soliloquizing aloud, as very pre-occupied people do, he had entered the alley, at the end of which were the stairs which led to his chamber.

"How, badly? What do you mean by that, you idiot?" asked D'Artagnan. "What has happened?"

"All sorts of misfortunes."

"What?"

"In the first place, M. Athos is arrested."

"Arrested! Athos arrested! What for?"

"He was found in your lodging; they took him for you."

"And by whom was he arrested?"

"By guards brought by the black men whom you put to flight."

"Why did he not tell them his name? Why did he not tell them he knew nothing about this affair?"

"He took care not to do so, Monsieur; on the contrary, he came up to me and said, 'It is your master that needs his liberty at this moment, and not I, since he knows everything, and I know nothing. They will believe he is arrested, and that will give him time; in three days I

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will tell them who I am, and they cannot fail to let me go.'"

"Bravo, Athos! noble heart!" murmured D'Artagnan. "I know him well there! And what did the officers do?"

"Four conveyed him away, I don't know where, — to the Bastille or Fort L'Évêque. Two remained with the men in black, who rummaged every place, and took all the papers. The last two mounted guard at the door during this examination; then, when all was over, they went away, leaving the house empty and exposed."

"And Porthos and Aramis?"

"I could not find them; they did not come."

"But they may come any moment, for you left word that I awaited them?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, don't budge, then; if they come, tell them what has happened. Let them wait for me at the Fir Cone Cabaret. Here it would be dangerous; the house may be watched. I will run to M. de Tréville to tell him all this, and will meet them there."

"Very well, Monsieur," said Planchet.

"But you will remain; you are not afraid?" said D'Artagnan, coming back to recommend courage to his lackey.

"Be easy, Monsieur," said Planchet; "you do not know me yet. I am brave when I set about it. It is all in beginning. Besides, I am a Picard."

"Then it is understood," said D'Artagnan; "you would rather be killed than desert your post?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and there is nothing I would not do to prove to Monsieur that I am attached to him."

"Good!" said D'Artagnan to himself. "It appears that the method I have adopted with this boy is decidedly the best. I shall use it again upon occasion."

And with all the swiftness of his legs, already a little

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fatigued, however, with the perambulations of the day, D'Artagnan directed his course towards the Rue du Colombier.

M. de Tréville was not at his hôtel. His company was on guard at the Louvre; he was at the Louvre with his company.

It was necessary to reach M. de Tréville; it was important that he should be informed of what was passing. D'Artagnan resolved to try and enter the Louvre. His costume of guardsman in the company of M. d'Essart ought to be his passport.

He therefore went down the Rue des Petits Augustins, and came up to the quay, in order to take the New Bridge. He had at first an idea of crossing by the ferry; but on gaining the river-side, he had mechanically put his hand into his pocket, and perceived that he had not wherewithal to pay his passage.

As he gained the top of the Rue Guénegaud, he saw two persons coming out of the Rue Dauphine whose appearance very much struck him. Of the two persons who composed this group, one was a man, and the other a woman. The woman had the outline of Madame Bonacieux; the man resembled Aramis so much as to be mistaken for him.

Besides, the woman wore that black mantle which D'Artagnan could still see outlined on the shutter of the Rue de Vaugirard, and on the door of the Rue de la Harpe; still further, the man wore the uniform of a musketeer.

The woman's hood was pulled down, and the man held a handkerchief to his face. Both, as this double precaution indicated, had an interest in not being recognized.

They took the bridge. That was D'Artagnan's road, as he was going to the Louvre. D'Artagnan followed them.

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He had not gone twenty steps before he became convinced that the woman was really Madame Bonacieux, and that the man was Aramis.

He felt at that instant all the suspicions of jealousy agitating his heart. He felt himself doubly betrayed, by his friend, and by her whom he already loved like a mistress. Madame Bonacieux had declared to him, by all the gods, that she did not know Aramis; and a quarter of an hour after having made this assertion, he found her hanging on the arm of Aramis.

D'Artagnan did not reflect that he had only known the mercer's pretty wife for three hours; that she owed him nothing but a little gratitude for having delivered her from the men in black, who wished to carry her off, and that she had promised him nothing. He considered himself an outraged, betrayed, and ridiculed lover. Blood and anger mounted to his face; he was resolved to unravel the mystery.

The young man and young woman perceived they were watched, and redoubled their speed. D'Artagnan determined upon his course. He passed them, then returned so as to meet them exactly before the Samaritaine, which was illuminated by a lamp which threw its light over all that part of the bridge.

D'Artagnan stopped before them, and they stopped before him.

"What do you want, Monsieur?" demanded the musketeer, recoiling a step, and with a foreign accent, which proved to D'Artagnan that he was deceived in one of his conjectures.

"It is not Aramis!" cried he.

"No, Monsieur, it is not Aramis; and by your exclamation I perceive you have mistaken me for another, and pardon you."

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"You pardon me?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Yes," replied the unknown. "Allow me, then, to pass on, since it is not with me you have anything to do."

"You are right, Monsieur, it is not with you that I have anything to do; it is with Madame."

"With Madame! You do not know her," replied the stranger.

"You are deceived, Monsieur; I know her very well."

"Ah," said Madame Bonacieux, in a tone of reproach, — "ah, Monsieur, I had your promise as a soldier and your word as a gentleman. I hoped to be able to rely upon that."

"And I, Madame!" said D'Artagnan, embarrassed; "you promised me — "

"Take my arm, Madame," said the stranger, "and let us continue our way."

D'Artagnan, however, stupefied, cast down, annihilated by all that happened, stood, with crossed arms, before the musketeer and Madame Bonacieux.

The musketeer advanced two steps, and pushed D'Artagnan aside with his hand. D'Artagnan made a spring backwards and drew his sword. At the same time, and with the rapidity of lightning, the unknown drew his.

"In the name of heaven, my Lord!" cried Madame Bonacieux, throwing herself between the combatants, and seizing the swords with her hands.

"My Lord!" cried D'Artagnan, enlightened by a sudden idea, "my Lord! Pardon me, Monsieur, but are you not — "

"My Lord, the Duke of Buckingham," said Madame Bonacieux, in an undertone; "and now you may ruin us all."

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"My Lord, Madame, I ask a hundred pardons! but I love her, my Lord, and was jealous. You know what it is to love, my Lord. Pardon me, and then tell me how I can risk my life to serve your Grace?"

"You are a brave young man," said Buckingham, holding out his hand to D'Artagnan, who pressed it respectfully. "You offer me your services; with the same frankness I accept them. Follow us at a distance of twenty paces, as far as the Louvre, and if any one watches us, slay him!"

D'Artagnan placed his naked sword under his arm, allowed the duke and Madame Bonacieux to take twenty steps ahead, and then followed them, ready to execute the instructions of the noble and elegant minister of Charles I.

Fortunately, he had no opportunity to give the duke this proof of his devotion, and the young woman and the handsome musketeer entered the Louvre by the wicket of the Échelle without any interference.

As for D'Artagnan, he immediately repaired to the cabaret of the Fir Cone, where he found Porthos and Aramis awaiting him. Without giving them any explanation of the alarm and inconvenience he had caused them, he told them that he had terminated the affair alone in which he had for a moment believed he should need their assistance.

Meanwhile, carried away as we are by our narrative, we must leave our three friends to themselves, and follow the Duke of Buckingham and his guide through the labyrinths of the Louvre.

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CHAPTER XII.

GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

MADAME BONACIEUX and the duke entered the Louvre without difficulty. Madame Bonacieux was known to belong to the queen; the duke wore the uniform of the Musketeers of M. de Tréville, who, as we have said, were that evening on guard. Besides, Germain was in the interests of the queen; and if anything should happen, Madame Bonacieux would be accused of having introduced her lover into the Louvre, that was all. She took the risk upon herself. Her reputation would be lost, it is true; but of what value in the world was the reputation of the little wife of a mercer?

Once within the interior of the court, the duke and the young woman followed the wall for the space of about twenty-five steps. This space passed, Madame Bonacieux pushed a little servant's door, open by day, but generally closed at night. The door yielded. Both entered, and found themselves in darkness; but Madame Bonacieux was acquainted with all the turnings and windings of this part of the Louvre, appropriated for the people of the household. She closed the door after her, took the duke by the hand, and after a few experimental steps, grasped a balustrade, put her foot upon the bottom step, and began to ascend the staircase. The duke counted two stories. She then turned to the right, followed the course of a long corridor, descended a flight, went a few steps farther, introduced a key into a lock, opened a door, and pushed

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the duke into an apartment lighted only by a night lamp, saying, "Remain here, my Lord Duke; some one will come." She then went out by the same door, which she locked, so that the duke found himself literally a prisoner.

Nevertheless, isolated as he was, we must say that the Duke of Buckingham did not experience an instant of fear. One of the salient points of his character was the search for adventures and a love of romance. Brave, rash, and enterprising, this was not the first time he had risked his life in such attempts. He had learned that the pretended message from Anne of Austria, upon the faith of which he had come to Paris, was a snare; but instead of regaining England, he had, abusing the position in which he had been placed, declared to the queen that he would not depart without seeing her. The queen had at first positively refused; but at length became afraid that the duke, if exasperated, would commit some folly. She had already decided upon seeing him and urging his immediate departure, when, on the very evening of coming to this decision, Madame Bonacieux, who was charged with going to fetch the duke and conducting him to the Louvre, was abducted. For two days no one knew what had become of her, and everything remained in suspense; but once free, and placed in communication with Laporte, matters resumed their course, and she accomplished the perilous enterprise which, but for her arrest, would have been executed three days earlier.

Buckingham, left alone, walked towards a mirror. His musketeer's uniform became him marvellously.

At thirty-five, which was then his age, he passed, with just title, for the handsomest gentleman and the most elegant cavalier of France or England.

The favorite of two kings, immensely rich, all powerful in a kingdom which he disordered at his fancy, and

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calmed again at his caprice, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, had lived one of those fabulous existences which survive, in the course of centuries, to astonish posterity.

Sure of himself, convinced of his own power, certain that the laws which rule other men could not reach him, he went straight to the object he aimed at, even were this object so elevated and so dazzling that it would have been madness for any other even to have contemplated it. It was thus he had succeeded in approaching several times the beautiful and proud Anne of Austria, and in making himself loved by dazzling her.

George Villiers placed himself before the glass, as we have said, restored the undulations to his beautiful hair, which the weight of his hat had disordered, twisted his mustache, and, his heart swelling with joy, happy and proud at being near the moment he had so long sighed for, he smiled upon himself with pride and hope.

At this moment a door concealed in the tapestry opened, and a woman appeared. Buckingham saw this apparition in the glass; he uttered a cry. It was the queen!

Anne of Austria was then twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age; that is to say, she was in the full splendor of her beauty.

Her carriage was that of a queen or a goddess; her eyes, which cast the brilliancy of emeralds, were perfectly beautiful, and yet were at the same time full of sweetness and majesty.

Her mouth was small and rosy; and although her under-lip, like that of all princes of the House of Austria, protruded slightly beyond the other, it was eminently lovely in its smile, but as profoundly disdainful in its contempt.

Her skin was admired for its velvety softness; her hands

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and arms were of surpassing beauty, all the poets of the time singing them as incomparable.

Lastly, her hair, which, from being light in her youth, had become chestnut, and which she wore curled very plainly, and with much powder, admirably set off her face, in which the most rigid critic could only have desired a little less rouge, and the most fastidious sculptor a little more fineness in the nose.

Buckingham remained for a moment dazzled. Never had Anne of Austria appeared to him so beautiful, amid balls, fêtes, or carousals, as she appeared to him at this moment, dressed in a simple robe of white satin, and accompanied by Donna Estefania, — the only one of her Spanish women who had not been driven from her by the jealousy of the king, or by the persecutions of Richelieu.

Anne of Austria took two steps forward. Buckingham threw himself at her feet, and before the queen could prevent him, kissed the hem of her robe.

"Duke, you already know that it is not I who caused you to be written to."

"Yes, yes, Madame! yes, your Majesty!" cried the duke. "I know that I must have been mad, senseless, to believe that snow would become animated or marble warm; but what then! they who love believe easily in love. Besides, I have lost nothing by this journey because I see you."

"Yes," replied Anne, "but you know why and how I see you; because, insensible to all my sufferings, you persist in remaining in a city where, by remaining, you run the risk of your life, and make me run the risk of my honor. I see you to tell you that everything separates us, — the depths of the sea, the enmity of kingdoms, the sanctity of vows. It is sacrilege to struggle against so

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many things, my Lord. In short, I see you to tell you that we must never see each other again."

"Speak on, Madame, speak on, Queen," said Buckingham; "the sweetness of your voice covers the harshness of your words. You talk of sacrilege! why, the sacrilege is the separation of two hearts formed by God for each other."

"My Lord," cried the queen, "you forget that I have never said that I loved you."

"But you have never told me that you did not love me; and truly, to speak such words to me would be, on the part of your Majesty, too great an ingratitude. For tell me, where can you find a love like mine, — a love which neither time, nor absence, nor despair, can extinguish, a love which contents itself with a lost ribbon, a stray look, or a chance word? It is now three years, Madame, since I saw you for the first time, and during those three years I have loved you thus. Shall I tell you how you were dressed the first time I saw you? Shall I describe to you each ornament of your toilet? Mark! I see you now. You were seated upon cushions in the Spanish fashion; you wore a robe of green satin embroidered with gold and silver, hanging sleeves knotted upon your beautiful arms — those lovely arms — with large diamonds. You wore a close ruff, a small cap upon your head of the same color as your robe, and in that cap a heron's feather. Hold, hold! I shut my eyes, and I can see you as you then were; I open them again, and I see what you are now, — a hundred times more beautiful!"

"What folly," murmured Anne of Austria, who had not the courage to find fault with the duke for having so well preserved her portrait in his heart, — "what folly to feed a useless passion with such remembrances!"

"And upon what then must I live? I have nothing but memory. It is my happiness, my treasure, my hope.

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Every time I see you is a fresh diamond which I enclose in the casket of my heart. This is the fourth which you have let fall and I have picked up; for in three years, Madame, I have only seen you four times, — the first, which I have just described to you; the second, at the mansion of Madame de Chevreuse; the third, in the gardens of Amiens."

"Duke," said the queen, blushing, "never speak of that evening."

"Oh, let us speak of it; on the contrary, let us speak of it! That is the most happy and brilliant evening of my life! You remember what a beautiful night it was! How soft and perfumed was the air; how lovely the blue heavens and star-enamelled sky! Ah, then, Madame, I was able for one instant to be alone with you. Then you were about to tell me all, — the isolation of your life, the griefs of your heart. You leaned upon my arm, — upon this, Madame! I felt, in bending my head towards you, your beautiful hair touch my cheek; and every time that it touched me I trembled from head to foot. Oh, queen, queen! you do not know what felicity from heaven, what joys from paradise, are comprised in a moment like that. Take my wealth, my fortune, my glory, all the days I have to live, for such an instant, for a night like that. For that night, Madame, that night you loved me, I will swear it."

"My Lord, yes; it is possible that the influence of the place, the charm of the beautiful evening, the fascination of your look, — the thousand circumstances, in short, which sometimes unite to destroy a woman, — were grouped around me on that fatal evening; but, my Lord, you saw the queen come to the aid of the woman, who faltered. At the first word you dared to utter, at the first freedom to which I had to reply, I called for help."

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"Yes, yes, that is true. And any other love but mine would have sunk beneath this ordeal; but my love came out from it more ardent and more eternal. You believed that you would fly from me by returning to Paris; you believed that I would not dare to quit the treasure over which my master had charged me to watch. What to me were all the treasures in the world, or all the kings of the earth! Eight days after, I was back again, Madame. That time you had nothing to say to me; I had risked my life and my favor to see you but for a second. I did not even touch your hand, and you pardoned me on seeing me so submissive and so repentant."

"Yes, but calumny seized upon all those follies in which I took no part, as you well know, my Lord. The king, excited by the cardinal, made a terrible clamor. Madame de Vernel was driven from me, Putange was exiled, Madame de Chevreuse fell into disgrace, and when you wished to come back as ambassador to France, the king himself, — remember, my Lord, — the king himself opposed it."

"Yes, and France is about to pay for her king's refusal with a war. I am not allowed to see you, Madame, but you shall every day hear of me. What object, think you, have this expedition to Ré and this league with the Protestants of Rochelle which I am projecting? The pleasure of seeing you. I have no hope of penetrating, sword in hand, to Paris, I know that well. But this war may bring round a peace; this peace will require a negotiator; that negotiator will be me. They will not dare to refuse me then; and I will return to Paris, and will see you again, and will be happy for an instant. Thousands of men, it is true, will have to pay for my happiness with their lives; but what is that to me, provided I see you again! All this is perhaps folly, — perhaps in-

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sanity; but tell me what woman has a lover more truly in love, what queen a servant more ardent?"

"My Lord, my Lord, you invoke in your defence things which accuse you more strongly. All these proofs of love which you would give me are almost crimes."

"Because you do not love me, Madame! If you loved me, you would view all this otherwise. If you loved me, oh, if you loved me, that would be too great happiness, and I should run mad. Ah, Madame de Chevreuse, of whom you spoke but now, Madame de Chevreuse was less cruel than you. Holland loved her, and she responded to his love."

"Madame de Chevreuse was not queen," murmured Anne of Austria, overcome, in spite of herself, by the expression of so profound a passion.

"You would love me, then, if you were not queen! Madame, say that you would love me then! I can believe that it is the dignity of your rank alone which makes you cruel to me; I can believe that if you had been Madame de Chevreuse, poor Buckingham might have hoped. Thanks for those sweet words! Oh, my beautiful sovereign, a hundred times, thanks!"

"Oh, my Lord! you have ill understood, wrongly interpreted; I did not mean to say —"

"Silence, silence!" cried the duke. "If I am happy in an error, do not have the cruelty to lift me from it. You have told me yourself, Madame, that I have been drawn into a snare; I, perhaps, may leave my life in it, — for, although it be strange, I have for some time had a presentiment that I should shortly die." And the duke smiled, with a smile at once sad and charming.

"Oh, my God!" cried Anne of Austria, with an accent of terror which proved how much greater an interest she took in the duke than she ventured to tell.

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"I do not tell you this, Madame, to terrify you; no, it is even ridiculous for me to name it to you, and, believe me, I take no heed of such dreams. But the words you have just spoken, the hope you have almost given me, will have richly paid all, — were it my life."

"Oh, but I," said Anne, "I also, duke, have had presentiments; I also have had dreams. I dreamed that I saw you lying bleeding, wounded."

"In the left side, was it not, and with a knife?" interrupted Buckingham.

"Yes, it was so, my Lord, it was so, — in the left side, and with a knife. Who can possibly have told you I had had that dream? I have imparted it to no one but my God, and that in my prayers."

"I ask for no more. You love me, Madame; it is enough."

"I love you, I?"

"Yes, yes. Would God send the same dreams to you as to me if you did not love me? Should we have the same presentiments if our existences did not touch at the heart? You love me, my beautiful queen, and you will weep for me?"

"Oh, my God, my God!" cried Anne of Austria, "this is more than I can bear. In the name of Heaven, Duke, leave me, go! I do not know whether I love you or love you not; but what I know is that I will not be perjured. Take pity on me, then, and go! Oh, if you are struck in France, if you die in France, if I could imagine that your love for me was the cause of your death, I could not console myself; I should run mad. Depart then, depart, I implore you!"

"Oh, how beautiful you are thus! Oh, how I love you!" said Buckingham.

"Go, go, I implore you, and return hereafter! Come

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back as ambassador, come back as minister, come back surrounded with guards who will defend you, with servants who will watch over you, and then I shall no longer fear for your days, and I shall be happy in seeing you."

"Oh, is this true that you say?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then, some pledge of your indulgence, some object which came from you, and may remind me that I have not been dreaming; something you have worn, and that I may wear in my turn, — a ring, a necklace, a chain."

"Will you depart, — will you depart, if I give you that you demand?"

"Yes."

"This very instant?"

"Yes."

"You will leave France, you will return to England?"

"I will, I swear to you."

"Wait, then, wait."

Anne of Austria re-entered her apartment, and came out again almost immediately, holding a rosewood casket in her hand, with her cipher incrusted with gold.

"Here, my Lord, here," said she, "keep this in memory of me."

Buckingham took the casket, and fell a second time on his knees.

"You have promised me to go," said the queen.

"And I keep my word. Your hand, Madame, your hand, and I depart!"

Anne of Austria stretched forth her hand, closing her eyes, and leaning with the other upon Estefania, for she felt that her strength was about to fail her.

Buckingham pressed his lips passionately to that beautiful hand, and then rising, said, "Within six months,

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if I am not dead, I shall have seen you again, Madame, — even if I have to overturn the world." And faithful to the promise he had made, he rushed out of the apartment.

In the corridor he met Madame Bonacieux, who waited for him, and who, with the same precautions and the same good luck, conducted him out of the Louvre.

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CHAPTER XIII.

MONSIEUR BONACIEUX.

THERE was in all this, as may have been observed, one personage concerned, of whom, notwithstanding his precarious position, we have appeared to take but very little notice. This personage was M. Bonacieux, the respectable martyr of the political and amorous intrigues which entangled themselves so nicely together at this gallant and chivalric period.

Fortunately, the reader may remember, or may not remember, — fortunately we have promised not to lose sight of him.

The officers who arrested him conducted him straight to the Bastille, where he passed tremblingly before a party of soldiers who were loading their muskets. Thence, introduced into a half-subterranean gallery, he became, on the part of those who had brought him, the object of the grossest insults and the harshest treatment. The officers perceived that they had not to deal with a gentleman, and they treated him like a very peasant.

At the end of half an hour, or thereabouts, a clerk came to put an end to his tortures, but not to his anxiety, by giving the order to conduct M. Bonacieux to the Chamber of Examination. Ordinarily, prisoners were interrogated in their cells; but they did not do so with M. Bonacieux.

Two guards attended the mercer who made him traverse a court, and enter a corridor in which were three sentinels, opened a door and pushed him unceremoniously

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into a low room, where the only furniture was a table, a chair, and a commissary. The commissary was seated in the chair, and was writing at the table.

The two guards led the prisoner towards the table, and upon a sign from the commissary drew back so far as to be unable to hear anything.

The commissary, who had till this time held his head down over his papers, looked up to see what sort of person he had to do with. This commissary was a man of very repulsive mien, with a pointed nose, with yellow and salient cheekbones, with eyes small, but keen and penetrating, and an expression of countenance resembling at once the polecat and the fox. His head, supported by a long and flexible neck, issued from his large black robe, balancing itself with a motion very much like that of the tortoise thrusting his head out of his shell. He began by asking M. Bonacieux his name, age, condition, and abode.

The accused replied that his name was Jacques Michel Bonacieux, that he was fifty-one years old, a retired mercer, and lived Rue des Fossoyeurs, No. 14.

The commissary then, instead of continuing to interrogate him, made him a long speech upon the danger there is for an obscure citizen to meddle with public matters. He complicated this exordium by an exposition in which he painted the power and the deeds of the cardinal, that incomparable minister, that conqueror of past ministers, that example for ministers to come, — deeds and power which none could thwart with impunity.

After this second part of his discourse, fixing his hawk's eye upon poor Bonacieux, he bade him reflect upon the gravity of his situation.

The reflections of the mercer were already made; he cursed the instant when M. Laporte formed the idea of

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marrying him to his goddaughter, but more particularly that instant in which that goddaughter had been received as Lady of the Linen to her Majesty.

At bottom the character of M. Bonacieux was one of profound selfishness mixed with sordid avarice, the whole seasoned with extreme cowardice. The love with which his young wife had inspired him was a secondary sentiment, and was not strong enough to contend with the primitive feelings we have just enumerated. Bonacieux indeed reflected upon what had just been said to him.

"But, Monsieur commissary," said he, calmly, "believe that I know and appreciate, more than anybody, the merit of the incomparable eminence by whom we have the honor to be governed."

"Indeed?" asked the commissary, with an air of doubt. "If that is really so, how came you in the Bastille?"

"How I came there, or rather why I am there," replied Bonacieux, "that is entirely impossible for me to tell you, because I don't know myself; but to a certainty it is not for having, knowingly at least, disobliged Monsieur the Cardinal."

"You must, nevertheless, have committed a crime, since you are here, and are accused of high treason."

"Of high treason!" cried Bonacieux, terrified, "of high treason! How is it possible for a poor mercer, who detests Huguenots and who abhors Spaniards, to be accused of high treason? Consider, Monsieur, the thing is absolutely impossible."

"M. Bonacieux," said the commissary, looking at the accused, as if his little eyes had the faculty of reading to the very depths of hearts, — "M. Bonacieux, you have a wife?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the mercer, in a tremble, feeling that it was at this point affairs were likely to become perplexing; "that is to say, I *had* one."

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"What, you '*had* one'? What have you done with her then, if you have her no longer?"

"They have abducted her, Monsieur."

"They have abducted her? Ah!"

Bonacieux inferred from this "Ah" that the affair grew more and more intricate.

"They have abducted her," added the commissary; "and do you know the man who has committed this deed?"

"I think I know him."

"Who is he?"

"Remember that I affirm nothing, Monsieur the Commissary, and that I only suspect."

"Whom do you suspect? Come, answer freely."

M. Bonacieux was in the greatest perplexity possible. Had he better deny everything or tell everything? By denying all, it might be suspected that he must know too much to avow; by confessing all he might prove his good-will. He decided, then, to tell all.

"I suspect," said he, "a tall, dark man, of lofty carriage, who has the air of a great lord. He has followed us several times, as I think, when I have waited for my wife at the wicket of the Louvre to escort her home."

The commissary now appeared to experience a little uneasiness.

"And his name?" said he.

"Oh, as to his name, I know nothing about it; but if I were ever to meet him, I should recognize him in an instant, I will answer for it, were he among a thousand persons."

The face of the commissary grew still darker.

"You should recognize him among a thousand, say you?" continued he.

"That is to say," cried Bonacieux, who saw he had taken a false step, — "that is to say, —"

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"You have answered that you should recognize him," said the commissary. "That is all very well, and enough for to-day; before we proceed further, some one must be informed that you know the ravisher of your wife."

"But I have not told you that I know him!" cried Bonacieux, in despair. "I told you, on the contrary—"

"Take away the prisoner," said the commissary to the two guards.

"Where must we place him?" demanded the chief.

"In a dungeon."

"Which?"

"Good Lord! in the first one handy, provided it is safe," said the commissary, with an indifference which penetrated poor Bonacieux with horror.

"Alas, alas!" said he to himself, "misfortune is over my head; my wife must have committed some frightful crime. They believe me her accomplice, and will punish me with her. She must have spoken; she must have confessed everything, — a woman is so weak! A dungeon! The first he comes to! That's it! A night is soon passed; and to-morrow to the wheel, to the gallows! Oh, my God, my God, have pity on me!"

Without listening the least in the world to the lamentations of M. Bonacieux, — lamentations to which, besides, they must have been pretty well accustomed, — the two guards took the prisoner each by an arm, and led him away, while the commissary wrote a letter in haste, and despatched it by an officer in waiting.

Bonacieux could not close his eyes; not because his dungeon was so very disagreeable, but because his uneasiness was so great. He sat all night on his stool, starting at the least noise; and when the first rays of the sun penetrated into his chamber, the dawn itself appeared to him to have taken funereal tints.

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All at once he heard his bolts drawn, and made a terrified bound. He believed they were come to conduct him to the scaffold; so that when he saw merely and simply, instead of the executioner he expected, only his commissary of the preceding evening, attended by his clerk, he was ready to embrace them both.

"Your affair has become more complicated since yesterday evening, my good man, and I advise you to tell the whole truth; for your repentance alone can remove the anger of the cardinal."

"Why, I am ready to tell everything," cried Bonacieux, "at least, all that I know. Interrogate me, I entreat you!"

"Where is your wife, in the first place?"

"Why, did not I tell you she had been stolen from me?"

"Yes, but yesterday at five o'clock in the afternoon, thanks to you, she escaped."

"My wife escaped!" cried Bonacieux. "Oh, unfortunate creature! Monsieur, if she has escaped, it is not my fault, I swear."

"What business had you then to go into the chamber of M. d'Artagnan, your neighbor, with whom you had a long conference during the day?"

"Ah, yes, Monsieur commissary; yes, that is true, and I confess that I was in the wrong. I did go to M. d'Artagnan's."

"What was the aim of that visit?"

"To beg him to assist me in finding my wife. I believed I had a right to endeavor to find her. I was deceived, as it appears, and I ask your pardon."

"And what did M. d'Artagnan reply?"

"M. d'Artagnan promised me his assistance; but I soon found out that he was betraying me."

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"You impose upon justice. M. d'Artagnan made a compact with you; and in virtue of that compact put to flight the police who had arrested your wife, and has placed her beyond reach."

"M. d'Artagnan has carried off my wife! What do you tell me?"

"Fortunately, M. d'Artagnan is in our hands, and you shall be confronted with him."

"By my faith, I ask no better," cried Bonacieux; "I shall not be sorry to see the face of an acquaintance."

"Bring in M. d'Artagnan," said the commissary to the guards. The two guards led in Athos.

"M. d'Artagnan," said the commissary, addressing Athos, "declare all that passed yesterday between you and Monsieur."

"But," cried Bonacieux, "this is not M. d'Artagnan whom you show me."

"What! not M. d'Artagnan!" exclaimed the commissary.

"Not the least in the world," replied Bonacieux.

"What is this gentleman's name?" asked the commissary.

"I cannot tell you; I don't know him."

"How! you don't know him?"

"No."

"Did you never see him?"

"Yes, I have seen him, but I don't know what he calls himself."

"Your name?" asked the commissary.

"Athos," replied the musketeer.

"But that is not a man's name; that is the name of a mountain," cried the poor questioner, who began to lose his head.

"That is my name," said Athos, quietly.

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"But you said that your name was D'Artagnan."

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you."

"Somebody said to me, 'You are M. d'Artagnan?' I answered, 'You think so?' My guards exclaimed that they were sure of it. I did not wish to contradict them; besides, I might be deceived."

"Monsieur, you insult the majesty of justice."

"Not at all," said Athos, calmly.

"You are M. d'Artagnan."

"You see, Monsieur, that you say it again."

"But, I tell you, Monsieur commissary," cried Bonacieux, in his turn, "there is not the least doubt about the matter. M. d'Artagnan is my tenant, although he does not pay me my rent, — and even better on that account ought I to know him. M. d'Artagnan is a young man, scarcely nineteen or twenty, and this gentleman is thirty at least. M. d'Artagnan is in M. d'Essart's Guards, and this gentleman is in the company of M. de Tréville's Musketeers. Look at his uniform, Monsieur commissary, look at his uniform!"

"That's true," murmured the commissary; "*pardieu*, that's true."

At this moment the door was opened quickly, and a messenger, introduced by one of the gate-keepers of the Bastille, gave a letter to the commissary.

"Oh, unhappy woman!" cried the commissary.

"How? What do you say? Of whom do you speak? It is not of my wife, I hope!"

"On the contrary, it is of her. Yours is a pretty business."

"But," said the agitated mercer, "do me the pleasure, Monsieur, to tell me how my own proper affair can become worse by anything my wife does while I am in prison?"

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"Because that which she does is part of a plan concerted between you, — of an infernal plan."

"I swear to you, Monsieur commissary, that you are in the profoundest error, that I know nothing in the world about what my wife had to do, that I am entirely a stranger to what she has done; and that if she has committed any follies, I renounce her, I abjure her, I curse her!"

"Bah!" said Athos to the commissary, "if you have no more need of me, send me somewhere. Your M. Bonacieux is very tiresome."

The commissary designated by the same gesture Athos and Bonacieux, "Let them be guarded more closely than ever."

"And yet," said Athos, with his habitual calmness, "if it be M. d'Artagnan who is concerned in this matter, I do not perceive how I can take his place."

"Do as I bade you," cried the commissary, "and preserve absolute secrecy. You understand!"

Athos shrugged his shoulders, and followed his guards silently, while M. Bonacieux uttered lamentations enough to break the heart of a tiger.

They locked the mercer in the same dungeon where he had passed the night, and left him to himself during the day. Bonacieux wept all day like a true mercer, not being at all a military man, as he himself informed us. In the evening, about nine o'clock, at the moment he had made up his mind to go to bed, he heard steps in his corridor. These steps drew near to his dungeon, the door was thrown open, and the guards appeared.

"Follow me," said an officer, who came behind the guards.

"Follow you!" cried Bonacieux, "follow you at this hour! Where, my God?"

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"Where we have orders to lead you."

"But that is not an answer."

"It is, nevertheless, the only one we can give."

"Ah, my God, my God!" murmured the poor mercer, "now, indeed, I am lost!" And he followed the guards who came for him mechanically and without resistance.

He passed along the same corridor as before, crossed one court, then a second side of the building; at length, at the gate of the entrance-court he found a carriage surrounded by four guards on horseback. They made him enter this carriage, the officer placed himself by his side, the door was locked, and they were left in a rolling prison. The carriage was put in motion as slowly as a funeral car. Through the closely fastened windows the prisoner could perceive the houses and the pavement, that was all; but, true Parisian as he was, Bonacieux could recognize every street by the milestones, the signs, and the lamps. At the moment of arriving at St. Paul, — the spot where such as were condemned at the Bastille were executed, — he was near fainting, and crossed himself twice. He thought the carriage was about to stop there. The carriage, however, passed on.

Farther on, a still greater terror seized him on passing by the cemetery of St. Jean, where State criminals were buried. One thing, however, reassured him; he remembered that before they were buried their heads were generally cut off, and he felt that his head was still on his shoulders. But when he saw the carriage take the way to La Grève, when he perceived the pointed roof of the Hôtel de Ville, and the carriage passed under the arcade, he believed all was over with him. He wished to confess to the officer, and upon his refusal, uttered such pitiable cries that the officer told him that if he continued to deafen him thus, he should put a gag in his mouth.

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This measure somewhat reassured Bonacieux. If they meant to execute him at La Grève, it could scarcely be worth while to gag him, as they had nearly reached the place of execution. Indeed, the carriage crossed the fatal spot without stopping. There remained then no other place to fear but the Traitor's Cross; the carriage was taking the direct road to it.

This time there was no longer any doubt; it was at the Traitor's Cross that lesser criminals were executed. Bonacieux had flattered himself in believing himself worthy of St. Paul or of the Place de Grève; it was at the Traitor's Cross that his journey and his destiny were about to end! He could not yet see that dreadful cross, but he felt somehow as if it were coming to meet him. When he was within twenty paces of it, he heard a noise of people, and the carriage stopped. This was more than poor Bonacieux could endure, depressed as he was by the successive emotions which he had experienced; he uttered a feeble groan which might have been taken for the last sigh of a dying man, and fainted.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN OF MEUNG.

The crowd was caused, not by the expectation of a man to be hung, but by the contemplation of a man who was hung.

The carriage, which had been stopped for a minute, resumed its way, passed through the crowd, threaded the Rue St. Honoré, turned into the Rue des Bons Enfans, and stopped before a low door.

The door opened; two guards received Bonacieux in their arms from the officer who supported him. They carried him through an alley, up a flight of stairs, and deposited him in an antechamber.

All these movements had been effected mechanically, as far as he was concerned. He had walked as one walks in a dream; he had a glimpse of objects as through a fog. His ears had perceived sounds without comprehending them; he might have been executed at that moment without his making a single gesture in his own defence, or uttering a cry to implore mercy.

He remained on the bench, with his back leaning against the wall and his hands hanging down, exactly on the spot where the guards placed him.

On looking around him, however, as he could perceive no threatening object, as nothing indicated that he ran any real danger, as the bench was comfortably covered with a well-stuffed cushion, as the wall was ornamented with beautiful Cordova leather, and as large red damask

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curtains, fastened back by gold clasps, floated before the window, he perceived by degrees that his fear was exaggerated, and he began to turn his head to the right and the left, upwards and downwards.

At this movement, which nobody opposed, he resumed a little courage, and ventured to draw up one leg and then the other. At length, with the help of his two hands he lifted himself from the bench, and found himself on his feet.

At this moment an officer with a pleasant face opened a door, continued to exchange some words with a person in the next chamber, and then came up to the prisoner. "Is your name Bonacieux?" said he.

"Yes, Monsieur officer," stammered the mercer, more dead than alive, "at your service."

"Come in," said the officer.

And he moved out of the way to let the mercer pass. The latter obeyed without reply, and entered the chamber, where he appeared to be expected.

It was a large cabinet, close and stifling, with the walls furnished with arms offensive and defensive, and in which there was already a fire, although it was scarcely the end of the month of September. A square table, covered with books and papers, upon which was unrolled an immense plan of the city of Rochelle, occupied the centre of the room.

Standing before the chimney was a man of middle height, of a haughty, proud mien; with piercing eyes, a large brow, and a thin face, which was made still longer by a *royal* (or *imperial*, as it is now called), surmounted by a pair of mustaches. Although this man was scarcely thirty-six or thirty-seven years of age, hair, mustaches, and royal, all began to be gray. This man, except a sword, had all the appearance of a soldier; and his buff boots,

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still slightly covered with dust, indicated that he had been on horseback in the course of the day.

This man was Armand Jean Duplessis, Cardinal Richelieu; not such as he is now represented, — broken down like an old man, suffering like a martyr, his body bent, his voice failing, buried in a large armchair as in an anticipated tomb; no longer living but by the strength of his genius, and no longer maintaining the struggle with Europe but by the eternal application of his thoughts, — but such as he really was at this period; that is to say, an active and gallant cavalier, already weak of body, but sustained by that moral power which made of him one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived, preparing, after having supported the Duc de Nevers in his duchy of Mantua, after having taken Nîmes, Castres, and Uzes, to drive the English from the Isle of Ré, and lay siege to Rochelle.

At first sight, nothing denoted the cardinal; and it was impossible for those who did not know his face to guess in whose presence they were.

The poor mercer remained standing at the door, while the eyes of the personage we have just described were fixed upon him, and appeared to wish to penetrate even into the depths of the past.

"Is this Bonacieux?" asked he, after a moment of silence.

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the officer.

"That 's well. Give me those papers, and leave us."

The officer took from the table the papers pointed out, gave them to him who asked for them, bowed to the ground, and retired.

Bonacieux recognized in these papers his interrogatories of the Bastille. From time to time the man by the chimney raised his eyes from the writings, and plunged them like poniards into the heart of the poor mercer.

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At the end of ten minutes of reading and ten seconds of examination, the cardinal had decided.

"That head has never conspired," murmured he, "but it matters not; we will see."

"You are accused of high treason," said the cardinal, slowly.

"So I have been told already, Monseigneur," cried Bonacieux, giving his interrogator the title he had heard the officer give him, "but I swear to you that I know nothing about it."

The cardinal repressed a smile.

"You have conspired with your wife, with Madame de Chevreuse, and with my Lord Duke of Buckingham."

"Indeed, Monseigneur," responded the mercer, "I have heard her pronounce all those names."

"And on what occasion?"

"She said that the Cardinal de Richelieu had drawn the Duke of Buckingham to Paris to ruin him, and to ruin the queen."

"She said that?" cried the cardinal, with violence.

"Yes, Monseigneur, but I told her she was wrong to talk about such things; and that his Eminence was incapable —"

"Hold your tongue! You are stupid," replied the cardinal.

"That 's exactly what my wife said, Monseigneur."

"Do you know who carried off your wife?"

"No, Monseigneur."

"You have suspicions, nevertheless?"

"Yes, Monseigneur; but these suspicions appeared to be disagreeable to Monsieur the commissary, and I no longer have them."

"Your wife has escaped. Did you know that?"

"No, Monseigneur. I learned it since I have been in

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prison, and that from the conversation of Monsieur the commissary, — an amiable man."

The cardinal repressed another smile.

"Then you are ignorant what is become of your wife since her flight."

"Absolutely, Monseigneur; but she has most likely returned to the Louvre."

"At one o'clock this morning she had not returned."

"My God, what can have become of her, then?"

"We shall know, be assured. Nothing is concealed from the cardinal; the cardinal knows everything."

"In that case, Monseigneur, do you believe the cardinal will be so kind as to tell me what has become of my wife?"

"Perhaps he may; but you must, in the first place, reveal to the cardinal all you know of your wife's relations with Madame de Chevreuse."

"But, Monseigneur, I know nothing about them; I have never seen her."

"When you went to fetch your wife from the Louvre, did you always return directly home?"

"Scarcely ever; she had business to transact with linen-drapers, to whose houses I conducted her."

"And how many were there of these linen-drapers?"

"Two, Monseigneur."

"And where did they live?"

"One in Rue de Vaugirard, the other Rue de la Harpe."

"Do you go into these houses with her?"

"Never, Monseigneur; I waited at the door."

"And what excuse did she give you for entering all alone?"

"She gave me none; she told me to wait, and I waited."

"You are a very complacent husband, my dear M. Bonacieux," said the cardinal.

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"He calls me his dear Monsieur," said the mercer to himself. "*Peste!* matters are going all right."

"Should you know those doors again?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the numbers?"

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"No. 25 in the Rue de Vaugirard; 75 in the Rue de la Harpe."

"That 's well," said the cardinal.

At these words he took up a silver bell, and rang it; the officer entered.

"Go," said he, in a subdued voice, "and find Rochefort. Tell him to come to me immediately, if he is returned."

"The count is here," said the officer, "and requests to speak with your Eminence instantly."

"Let him come in, then; let him come in, then!" said the cardinal, quickly.

The officer sprang out of the apartment with that alacrity which all the servants of the cardinal displayed in obeying him.

"To your Eminence!" murmured Bonacieux, rolling his eyes round in astonishment.

Five seconds had scarcely elapsed after the disappearance of the officer, when the door opened, and a new personage entered.

"It is he!" cried Bonacieux.

"He! what he?" asked the cardinal.

"The man who abducted my wife."

The cardinal rang a second time. The officer re-appeared.

"Place this man in the care of his guards again, and let him wait till I send for him."

"No, Monseigneur, no, it is not he!" cried Bonacieux; "no, I was deceived. This is quite another man, and

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does not resemble him at all. Monsieur is, I am sure, an honest man."

"Take away that fool!" said the cardinal.

The officer took Bonacieux by the arm, and led him into the antechamber, where he found his two guards.

The newly introduced personage followed Bonacieux impatiently with his eyes till he had gone out; and the moment the door closed, "They have seen each other," said he, approaching the cardinal eagerly.

"Who?" asked his Eminence.

"He and she."

"The queen and the duke?" cried Richelieu.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At the Louvre."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Who told you of it?"

"Madame de Lannoy, who is devoted to your Eminence, as you know."

"Why did she not let me know sooner?"

"Whether by chance or mistrust, the queen made Madame de Surgis sleep in her chamber, and detained her all day."

"Well, we are beaten! Now let us try to take our revenge."

"I will assist you with all my heart, Monseigneur; be assured of that."

"How did it come about?"

"At half-past twelve the queen was with her women—"

"Where?"

"In her bedchamber—"

"Go on."

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"When some one came and brought her a handkerchief from her laundress."

"And then?"

"The queen immediately exhibited strong emotion; and despite the rouge with which her face was covered evidently turned pale —"

"And then, and then?"

"She then arose, and with altered voice, 'Ladies,' said she, 'wait for me ten minutes, I shall soon return.' She then opened the door of her alcove, and went out."

"Why did not Madame de Lannoy come and inform you instantly?"

"Nothing was certain; besides, her Majesty had said, 'Ladies, wait for me,' and she did not dare to disobey the queen."

"How long did the queen remain out of the chamber?"

"Three-quarters of an hour."

"None of her women accompanied her?"

"Only Donna Estefania."

"Did she afterwards return?"

"Yes; but only to take a little rosewood casket, with her cipher upon it, and went out again immediately."

"And when she finally returned, did she bring that casket with her?"

"No."

"Does Madame de Lannoy know what was in that casket?"

"Yes; the diamond studs which his Majesty gave the queen."

"And she came back without this casket?"

"Yes."

"Madame de Lannoy, then, is of opinion that she gave them to Buckingham?"

"She is sure of it."

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"How can she be so?"

"In the course of the day Madame de Lannoy, in her quality of tire-woman of the queen, looked for this casket, appeared uneasy at not finding it, and at length asked information of the queen."

"And then the queen?"

"The queen became exceedingly red, and replied that having in the evening broken one of those studs, she had sent it to her goldsmith to be repaired."

"He must be called upon, and so ascertain if the thing be true or not."

"I have just been with him."

"And the goldsmith?"

"The goldsmith has heard nothing of it."

"Well, well! Rochefort, all is not lost; and perhaps, — perhaps everything is for the best."

"The fact is, that I do not doubt your Eminence's genius — "

"Will repair the blunders of his agent, — is that it?"

"That is exactly what I was going to say, if your Eminence had let me finish my sentence."

"Meanwhile do you know where the Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duke of Buckingham are now concealed?"

"No, Monseigneur; my people could tell me nothing on that head."

"But I know."

"You, Monseigneur?"

"Yes; or at least I guess. They were, one in the Rue de Vaugirard, No. 25; the other in the Rue de la Harpe, No. 75."

"Does your Eminence command that they both be instantly arrested?"

"It will be too late; they will be gone."

"But still, we can make sure that they are so."

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"Take ten men of my guardsmen, and search the two houses thoroughly."

"I go, Monseigneur." And Rochefort went hastily out of the apartment.

The cardinal being left alone, reflected for an instant and then rang the bell a third time. The same officer appeared.

"Bring the prisoner in again," said the cardinal.

M. Bonacieux was introduced afresh, and upon a sign from the cardinal, the officer retired.

"You have deceived me!" said the cardinal, sternly.

"I," cried Bonacieux, "I deceive your Eminence!"

"Your wife, in going to Rue de Vaugirard and Rue de la Harpe, did not go to find linen-drapers."

"Then why did she go, just God?"

"She went to meet the Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duke of Buckingham."

"Yes," cried Bonacieux, recalling all his remembrances of the circumstances, "yes, that's it. Your Eminence is right. I told my wife, several times, that it was surprising that linen-drapers should live in such houses as those, in houses that had no signs; but she always laughed at me. Ah, Monseigneur!" continued Bonacieux, throwing himself at his Eminence's feet, "ah, how truly you are the cardinal, the great cardinal, the man of genius whom all the world reveres!"

The cardinal, however contemptible might be the triumph gained over so vulgar a being as Bonacieux, did not the less enjoy it for an instant; then, almost immediately, as if a fresh thought had occurred, a smile played upon his lips, and he said, offering his hand to the mercer, "Rise, my friend, you are a worthy man."

"The cardinal has touched me with his hand! I have touched the hand of the great man!" cried Bonacieux. "The great man has called me his friend!"

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"Yes, my friend, yes," said the cardinal, with that paternal tone which he sometimes knew how to assume, but which deceived none who knew him; "and as you have been unjustly suspected, well, you must be indemnified. Here, take this purse of a hundred pistoles, and pardon me."

"I pardon you, Monseigneur!" said Bonacieux, hesitating to take the purse, fearing, doubtless, that this pretended gift was but a pleasantry. "But you are able to have me arrested, you are able to have me tortured, you are able to have me hung; you are the master, and I could not have the least word to say. Pardon you, Monseigneur! You cannot mean that!"

"Ah, my dear M. Bonacieux, you are generous in this matter. I see it and I thank you for it. Thus, then, you will take this bag, and you will go away without being too malcontent."

"I go away enchanted."

"Farewell, then, or rather, *au revoir*, for I hope we shall meet again."

"Whenever Monseigneur wishes; I am always at his Eminence's orders."

"And that will be frequently, I assure you, for I have found something extremely agreeable in your conversation."

"Oh, Monseigneur!"

"*Au revoir*, M. Bonacieux, *au revoir!*"

And the cardinal made him a sign with his hand, to which Bonacieux replied by bowing to the ground. He then went out backwards, and when he was in the antechamber the cardinal heard him, in his enthusiasm, crying aloud, "Long life to Monseigneur! Long life to his Eminence! Long life to the great cardinal!" The cardinal listened with a smile to this vociferous manifestation of the feelings of M. Bonacieux; and then, when

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Bonacieux's cries were no longer audible, "Good!" said he, "that man would henceforward lay down his life for me." And the cardinal began to examine with the greatest attention the map of Rochelle, which, as we have said, lay open on the desk, tracing with a pencil the line in which the famous dike was to pass which, eighteen months later, shut up the port of the besieged city. As he was in the deepest of his strategic meditations, the door opened, and Rochefort returned.

"Well?" said the cardinal, eagerly, rising with a promptitude which proved the degree of importance he attached to the commission with which he had charged the count.

"Well," said the latter, "a young woman of about twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age, and a man of from thirty-five to forty, have indeed lodged at the two houses pointed out by your Eminence; but the woman left last night, and the man this morning."

"It was they!" cried the cardinal, looking at the clock; "and now it is too late to have them pursued. The duchess is at Tours, and the duke at Boulogne. It is in London they must be found."

"What are your Eminence's orders?"

"Not a word of what has passed. Let the queen remain in perfect security; let her be ignorant that we know her secret. Let her believe that we are in search of some conspiracy or other. Send me the keeper of the seals, Séguier."

"And that man, what has your Eminence done with him?"

"What man?" asked the cardinal.

"That Bonacieux."

"I have done with him all that could be done. I have made him a spy upon his wife."

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The Comte de Rochefort bowed like a man who acknowledges the superiority of the master as great, and retired.

Left alone the cardinal seated himself again and wrote a letter, which he secured with his special seal. Then he rang. The officer entered for the fourth time.

"Tell Vitray to come to me," said he, "and tell him to get ready for a journey."

An instant after, the man he asked for was before him, booted and spurred.

"Vitray," said he, "you will go with all speed to London. You must not stop an instant on the way. You will deliver this letter to Milady. Here is an order for two hundred pistoles; call upon my treasurer and get the money. You shall have as much again if you are back within six days, and have executed your commission well."

The messenger, without replying a single word, bowed, took the letter, with the order for the two hundred pistoles, and retired.

Here is what the letter contained: —

MILADY, — Be at the first ball at which the Duke of Buckingham shall be present. He will wear on his doublet twelve diamond studs; get as near to him as you can, and cut off two.

As soon as these studs shall be in your possession, inform me.

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CHAPTER XV.

MEN OF THE ROBE AND MEN OF THE SWORD.

On the day after these events had taken place, Athos not having re-appeared, M. de Tréville was informed by D'Artagnan and Porthos of the circumstance. As to Aramis, he had asked for leave of absence for five days, and was gone, it was said, to Rouen on family business.

M. de Tréville was the father of his soldiers. The lowest or the least known of them, as soon as he assumed the uniform of the company, was as sure of his aid and support as if he had been his own brother.

He repaired, then, instantly to the office of the *lieutenant-criminel.* The officer who commanded the post of the Red Cross was sent for, and by successive inquiries they learned that Athos was then lodged in the Fort L'Évêque.

Athos had passed through all the examinations we have seen Bonacieux undergo.

We were present at the scene in which the two captives were confronted with each other. Athos, who had till that time said nothing for fear that D'Artagnan, interrupted in his turn, should not have the time necessary, from this moment declared that his name was Athos, and not D'Artagnan. He added that he did not know either Monsieur or Madame Bonacieux; that he had never spoken to the one or the other; that he had come, at about ten o'clock in the evening, to pay a visit to his

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friend, M. d'Artagnan, but that till that hour he had been at M. de Tréville's, where he had dined. "Twenty witnesses," added he, "could attest the fact;" and he named several distinguished gentlemen, and among them was M. le Duc de la Trémouille.

The second commissary was as much bewildered as the first had been by the simple and firm declaration of the musketeer, upon whom he was anxious to take the revenge which men of the robe like at all times to gain over men of the sword; but the name of M. de Tréville, and that of M. de la Trémouille, deserved a little reflection.

Athos was then sent to the cardinal; but unfortunately the cardinal was at the Louvre with the king.

It was precisely at this moment that M. de Tréville, on leaving the residence of the *lieutenant-criminel* and the governor of the Fort L'Évêque without being able to find Athos, arrived at the palace.

As captain of the Musketeers, M. de Tréville had the right of entry at all times.

It is well known how violent the king's prejudices were against the queen, and how carefully these prejudices were kept up by the cardinal, who in affairs of intrigue mistrusted women infinitely more than men. One of the grand causes of this prejudice was the friendship of Anne of Austria for Madame de Chevreuse. These two women gave him more uneasiness than the war with Spain, the quarrel with England, or the embarrassment of the finances. In his eyes, and to his conviction, Madame de Chevreuse not only served the queen in her political intrigues, but, what tormented him still more, in her amorous intrigues.

At the first word the cardinal spoke of Madame de Chevreuse, — who, though exiled to Tours and believed to be in that city, had come to Paris, remained there five days, and outwitted the police, — the king flew into a furi-

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ous passion. Capricious and unfaithful, the king wished to be called Louis the Just and Louis the Chaste. Posterity will find a difficulty in understanding this character, which history explains only by facts and never by reason.

But when the cardinal added that not only Madame de Chevreuse had been in Paris, but still further, that the queen had renewed with her one of those mysterious correspondences which at that time was named a *cabal;* when he affirmed that he, the cardinal, was about to unravel the most closely twisted thread of this intrigue; that at the moment of arresting in the very act, with all the proofs about her, the queen's emissary to the exiled duchess, a musketeer had dared to interrupt the course of justice violently, by falling sword in hand upon the honest men of the law, charged with investigating impartially the whole affair in order to place it before the eyes of the king, — Louis XIII. could not contain himself, and he made a step towards the queen's appartement with that pale and mute indignation which when it broke out led this prince to the commission of the most pitiless cruelty. And yet, in all this, the cardinal had not yet said a word about the Duke of Buckingham.

At this instant M. de Tréville entered, cool, polite, and in irreproachable costume.

Informed of what had passed by the presence of the cardinal, and the alteration in the king's countenance, M. de Tréville felt himself something like Samson before the Philistines.

Louis XIII. had already placed his hand on the knob of the door; at the noise of M. de Tréville's entrance he turned round. "You arrive in good time, Monsieur," said the king, who, when his passions were raised to a certain point, could not dissemble; "I have learned some fine things concerning your Musketeers."

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"And I," said Tréville, coldly, "I have some pretty things to tell your Majesty concerning these gownsmen."

"What?" said the king, with hauteur.

"I have the honor to inform your Majesty," continued M. de Tréville, in the same tone, "that a party of *procureurs*, commissaries, and men of the police — very estimable people, but very inveterate, as it appears, against the uniform — have taken upon themselves to arrest in a house, to lead away through the open street, and throw into the Fort L'Évêque, all upon an order which they have refused to show me, one of my, or rather your Musketeers, sire, of irreproachable conduct, of an almost illustrious reputation, and whom your Majesty knows favorably, M. Athos."

"Athos," said the king, mechanically; "yes, certainly I know that name."

"Let your Majesty remember," said Tréville, "that M. Athos is the musketeer who, in the annoying duel which you are acquainted with, had the misfortune to wound M. de Cahusac so seriously. *À propos*, Monseigneur," continued Tréville, addressing the cardinal, "M. de Cahusac is quite recovered, is he not?"

"Thank you," said the cardinal, biting his lips with anger.

"Athos, then, went to pay a visit to one of his friends absent at the time," continued Tréville, — "to a young Béarnais, a cadet in his Majesty's Guards, the company of M. d'Essart, but scarcely had he arrived at his friend's, and taken up a book, while waiting his return, when a mixed crowd of bailiffs and soldiers came and laid siege to the house, broke open several doors —"

The cardinal made the king a sign, which signified,

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"That was on account of the affair about which I spoke to you."

"We all know that," interrupted the king; "for all that was done for our service."

"Then," said Tréville, "it was also for your Majesty's service that one of my Musketeers, who was innocent, has been seized, that he has been placed between two guards like a malefactor, and that this gallant man, who has ten times shed his blood in your Majesty's service, and is ready to shed it again, has been paraded through the midst of an insolent populace."

"Bah!" said the king, who began to be shaken, "was it so managed?"

"M. de Tréville," said the cardinal, with the greatest phlegm, "does not tell your Majesty that this innocent musketeer, this gallant man, had only an hour before attacked, sword in hand, four commissaries of inquiry, who were delegated by myself to examine into an affair of the highest importance."

"I defy your Eminence to prove it," cried Tréville, with his Gascon freedom and military frankness; "for one hour before, M. Athos, who, I will confide it to your Majesty, is really a man of the highest quality, did me the honor after having dined with me to be conversing in the saloon of my hôtel, with the Duc de la Trémouille and the Comte de Châlus, who happened to be there."

The king looked at the cardinal.

"A written examination attests it," said the cardinal, replying aloud to the mute interrogation of his Majesty; "and the ill-treated people have drawn up the following, which I have the honor to present to your Majesty."

"And is the written report of gownsmen to be placed in comparison with the word of honor of a swordsman?" replied Tréville, haughtily.

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"Come, come, Tréville, hold your tongue," said the king.

"If his Eminence entertains any suspicion against one of my Musketeers," said Tréville, "the justice of Monsieur the Cardinal is so well known that I demand an inquiry."

"In the house in which this judicial inquiry was made," continued the impassible cardinal, "there lodges, I believe, a young Béarnais, a friend of the musketeer."

"Your Eminence means M. d'Artagnan."

"I mean a young man whom you patronize, M. de Tréville."

"Yes, your Eminence, it is the same."

"Do you not suspect this young man of having given bad counsel?"

"To Athos, to a man double his age?" interrupted Tréville. "No, Monseigneur. Besides, D'Artagnan passed the evening with me."

"Well," said the cardinal, "everybody seems to have passed the evening with you."

"Does your Eminence doubt my word?" said Tréville, with a brow flushed with anger.

"No, God forbid," said the cardinal; "only, at what hour was he with you?"

"Oh, as to that I can speak positively, your Eminence; for as he came in I remarked that it was but half-past nine by the clock, although I had believed it to be later."

"And at what hour did he leave your hôtel?"

"At half-past ten, — an hour after the event."

"Well," replied the cardinal, who could not for an instant suspect the loyalty of Tréville, and who felt that the victory was escaping him, — "well, but Athos *was* taken in the house in the Rue des Fossoyeurs."

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"Is one friend forbidden to visit another, or a musketeer of my company to fraternize with a guard of D'Essart's company?"

"Yes, when the house where he fraternizes is suspected."

"That house is suspected, Tréville," said the king; "perhaps you did not know it?"

"Indeed, sire, I did not. The house may be suspected; but I deny that it is so in the part of it inhabited by M. d'Artagnan, for I can affirm, sire, if I can believe what he says, that there does not exist a more devoted servant of your Majesty, or a more profound admirer of Monsieur the Cardinal."

"Was it not this D'Artagnan who wounded Jussac one day, in that unfortunate encounter which took place near the Convent of the Carmes-Déchaussés?" asked the king, looking at the cardinal, who colored with vexation.

"And the next day Bernajoux. Yes, sire, yes, it is the same; and your Majesty has a good memory."

"Come, how shall we decide?" said the king.

"That concerns your Majesty more than me," said the cardinal. "I should affirm the culpability."

"And I deny it," said Tréville. "But his Majesty has judges, and these judges will decide."

"That is best," said the king. "Send the case before the judges; it is their business to judge, and they shall judge."

"Only," replied Tréville, "it is a sad thing that, in the unfortunate times in which we live, the purest life, the most incontestable virtue, cannot exempt a man from infamy and persecution. The army, I will answer for it, will be but little pleased at being exposed to rigorous treatment on account of police affairs."

The expression was imprudent; but M. de Tréville launched it with knowledge of his cause. He was de-

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sirous of an explosion, because in that case the mine throws forth fire, and fire enlightens.

"Police affairs!" cried the king, taking up Tréville's words, — "police affairs! And what do you know about them, Monsieur? Meddle with your Musketeers, and do not annoy me in this way. It appears, according to your account, that if by mischance a musketeer is arrested, France is in danger. What a noise about a musketeer! I would arrest ten of them, *ventrebleu*, a hundred, even, all the company, and I would not allow a whisper."

"From the moment they are suspected by your Majesty," said Tréville, "the Musketeers are guilty; therefore, you see me prepared to surrender my sword, — for after having accused my soldiers, there can be no doubt that Monsieur the Cardinal will end by accusing me. It is best to constitute myself at once a prisoner with Athos, who is already arrested, and with D'Artagnan, who most probably will be."

"Gascon-headed man, will you have done?" said the king.

"Sire," replied Tréville, without lowering his voice in the least, "either order my musketeer to be restored to me, or let him be tried."

"He shall be tried," said the cardinal.

"Well, so much the better; for in that case I shall demand of his Majesty permission to plead for him."

The king feared an outbreak.

"If his Eminence," said he, "did not have personal motives — "

The cardinal saw what the king was about to say, and interrupted him: —

"Pardon me," said he; "but the instant your Majesty considers me a prejudiced judge, I withdraw."

"Come," said the king, "will you swear, by my father,

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that Athos was at your residence during the event, and that he took no part in it?"

"By your glorious father, and by yourself, whom I love and venerate above all the world, I swear it."

"Be so kind as to reflect, sire," said the cardinal. "If we release the prisoner thus, we shall never be able to know the truth."

"Athos may always be found," replied Tréville, "ready to answer, when it shall please the gownsmen to interrogate him. He will not desert, Monsieur the Cardinal, be assured of that; I will answer for him."

"No, he will not desert," said the king; "he can always be found, as Tréville says. Besides," added he, lowering his voice, and looking with a suppliant air at the cardinal, "let us give them apparent security; that is policy."

This policy of Louis XIII. made Richelieu smile.

"Order it as you please, sire; you possess the right of pardon."

"The right of pardoning only applies to the guilty," said Tréville, who was determined to have the last word, "and my musketeer is innocent. It is not mercy, then, that you are about to accord, sire, it is justice."

"And he is in the Fort L'Évêque?" said the king.

"Yes, sire, in solitary confinement, in a dungeon, like the lowest criminal."

"The devil, the devil!" murmured the king; "what must be done?"

"Sign the order for his release, and all will be said,' replied the cardinal. "I believe with your Majesty that M. de Tréville's guarantee is more than sufficient."

Tréville bowed very respectfully, with a joy that was not unmixed with fear; he would have preferred an obstinate resistance on the part of the cardinal to this sudden yielding.

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The king signed the order for release, and Tréville carried it away without delay. As he was about to leave the presence, the cardinal gave him a friendly smile, and said, "A perfect harmony reigns, sire, between the leader and the soldiers of your Musketeers, which must be profitable for the service, and honorable to all."

"He will play me some dog's trick or other, and that immediately," said Tréville. "One has never the last word with such a man. But let us be quick, — the king may change his mind in an hour; and at all events it is more difficult to replace a man in the Fort L'Évêque or the Bastille, who has got out, than to keep a prisoner there who is in."

M. de Tréville made his entrance triumphantly into the Fort L'Évêque, whence he delivered the musketeer, whose peaceful indifference had not for a moment abandoned him.

The first time he saw D'Artagnan, "You have come off well," said he to him; "there is your Jussac thrust paid for. There still remains that of Bernajoux, but you must not be too confident."

As to the rest, M. de Tréville had good reason to mistrust the cardinal, and to think that all was not over, for scarcely had the captain of the Musketeers closed the door after him, than his Eminence said to the king, "Now that we are at length by ourselves, we will, if your Majesty pleases, converse seriously. Sire, Buckingham has been in Paris five days, and only left it this morning."

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CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH M. SÉGUIER, THE KEEPER OF THE SEALS, LOOKS MORE THAN ONCE FOR THE BELL, IN ORDER TO RING IT, AS HE DID BEFORE.

It is impossible to form an idea of the impression these few words made upon Louis XIII. He grew pale and red alternately; and the cardinal saw at once that he had recovered by a single blow all the ground he had lost.

"Buckingham in Paris!" cried he, "and what does he come for?"

"To conspire, no doubt, with your enemies, the Huguenots and the Spaniards."

"No, *pardieu*, no! To conspire against my honor with Madame de Chevreuse, Madame de Longueville, and the Condés."

"Oh, sire, what an idea! The queen is too virtuous; and besides, loves your Majesty too well."

"Woman is weak, Monsieur Cardinal," said the king; "and as to loving me much, I have my own opinion as to that love."

"I not the less maintain," said the cardinal, "that the Duke of Buckingham came to Paris for a project wholly political."

"And I am sure that he came for quite another purpose, Monsieur Cardinal; but if the queen be guilty, let her tremble!"

"Indeed," said the cardinal, "whatever repugnance I may have to directing my mind to such a treason, your

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Majesty compels me to think of it. Madame de Lannoy, whom, according to your Majesty's command, I have frequently interrogated, told me this morning that the night before last her Majesty sat up very late, that this morning she wept much, and that she was writing all day."

"That's it!" cried the king; "to him, no doubt. Cardinal, I must have the queen's papers."

"But how to take them, sire? It seems to me that it is neither your Majesty nor myself who can charge himself with such a mission."

"How did they act with regard to the Maréchale d'Ancre?" cried the king, in the highest state of choler; "first her closets were thoroughly searched, and then she herself."

"The Maréchale d'Ancre was no more than the Maréchale d'Ancre, a Florentine adventurer, sire, and that was all; while the august spouse of your Majesty is Anne of Austria, Queen of France, — that is to say, one of the greatest princesses in the world."

"She is not the less guilty, Monsieur Duke! The more she has forgotten the high position in which she was placed, the more degrading is her fall. Besides, I long ago determined to put an end to all these petty intrigues of policy and love. She has near her a certain Laporte."

"Who, I believe, is the mainspring of all this, I confess," said the cardinal.

"You think, then, as I do, that she deceives me?" said the king.

"I believe, and I repeat it to your Majesty, that the queen conspires against the power of the king, but I have not said against his honor."

"And I, — I tell you against both. I tell you the queen does not love me; I tell you she loves another; I tell you

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she loves that infamous Buckingham! Why did you not have him arrested while in Paris?"

"Arrest the duke! Arrest the prime minister of King Charles I.! Think of it, sire! What a scandal! And if the suspicions of your Majesty, which I still continue to doubt, should prove to have any foundation, what a terrible disclosure, what a fearful scandal!"

"But as he exposed himself like a vagabond or a thief, he should have been —"

Louis XIII. stopped, terrified at what he was about to say, while Richelieu, stretching out his neck, waited uselessly for the word which had died on the lips of the king.

"He should have been? —"

"Nothing," said the king, "nothing. But all the time he was in Paris, you, of course, did not lose sight of him?"

"No, sire."

"Where did he lodge?"

"Rue de la Harpe, No. 75."

"Where is that?"

"By the side of the Luxembourg."

"And you are certain that the queen and he did not see each other?"

"I believe the queen to have too high a sense of her duty, sire."

"But they have corresponded; it is to him that the queen has been writing all the day. Monsieur Duke, I must have those letters!"

"Sire, notwithstanding —"

"Monsieur Duke, at whatever price it may be, I will have them."

"I would, however, beg your Majesty to observe —"

"Do you then also join in betraying me, Monsieur Car

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dinal, by thus always opposing my will? Are you also in accord with Spain and England, with Madame de Chevreuse and the queen?"

"Sire," replied the cardinal, sighing, "I believed myself secure from such a suspicion."

"Monsieur Cardinal, you have heard me; I will have those letters."

"There is but one way."

"What is that?"

"That would be to charge M. de Séguier, the Keeper of the Seals, with this mission. The matter enters completely into the duties of his post."

"Let him be sent for instantly."

"He is most likely at my hôtel. I requested him to call, and when I came to the Louvre I left orders if he came, to desire him to wait."

"Let him be sent for instantly."

"Your Majesty's orders shall be executed; but—"

"But what?"

"But the queen will perhaps refuse to obey."

"My orders?"

"Yes, if she is ignorant that these orders come from the king."

"Well, that she may have no doubt on that head, I will go and inform her myself."

"Your Majesty will not forget that I have done everything in my power to prevent a rupture."

"Yes, Duke, yes, I know you are very indulgent towards the queen, too indulgent, perhaps; we shall have occasion, I warn you, at some future period to speak of that."

"Whenever it shall please your Majesty; but I shall be always happy and proud, sire, to sacrifice myself to the harmony which I desire to see reign between you and the Queen of France."

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"Very well, Cardinal, very well; but, meantime, send for Monsieur the Keeper of the Seals. I will go to the queen."

And Louis XIII., opening the door of communication, passed into the corridor which led from his apartments to those of Anne of Austria.

The queen was in the midst of her women, — Madame de Guitaut, Madame de Sablé, Madame de Montbazon, and Madame de Guéménée. In a corner was the Spanish companion, Donna Estefania, who had followed her from Madrid. Madame Guéménée was reading aloud, and everybody was listening to her with attention with the exception of the queen, who had, on the contrary, desired this reading in order that she might be able, while feigning to listen, to pursue the thread of her own thoughts.

These thoughts, gilded as they were by a last reflection of love, were not the less sad. Anne of Austria, deprived of the confidence of her husband, pursued by the hatred of the cardinal, who could not pardon her for having repulsed a more tender feeling, having before her eyes the example of the queen-mother whom that hatred had tormented all her life, — though Marie de Medicis, if the memoirs of the time are to be believed, had begun by according to the cardinal that sentiment which Anne of Austria always refused him, — Anne of Austria had seen her most devoted servants fall around her, her most intimate confidants, her dearest favorites. Like those unfortunate persons endowed with a fatal gift, she brought misfortune upon everything she touched. Her friendship was a fatal sign which called down persecution. Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Vernel were exiled, and Laporte did not conceal from his mistress that he expected to be arrested every instant.

It was at the moment when she was plunged in the

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deepest and darkest of these reflections, that the door of the chamber opened, and the king entered.

The reader hushed herself instantly. All the ladies rose, and there was a profound silence. As to the king, he made no demonstration of politeness, only stopping before the queen, "Madame," said he, "you are about to receive a visit from the chancellor, who will communicate certain matters to you with which I have charged him."

The unfortunate queen, who was constantly threatened with divorce, exile, and trial even, turned pale under her rouge, and could not refrain from saying, "But why this visit, sire? What can the chancellor have to say to me that your Majesty could not say yourself?"

The king turned upon his heel without reply, and almost at the same instant the captain of the Guards, M. de Guitaut, announced the visit of the chancellor.

When the chancellor appeared, the king had already gone out by another door.

The chancellor entered, half-smiling, half-blushing. As we shall probably meet with him again in the course of our history, it may be well for our readers to be made at once acquainted with him.

This chancellor was a pleasant man. He was Des Roches le Masle, canon of Notre-Dame, who had formerly been valet of a bishop, who introduced him to his Eminence as a perfectly devout man. The cardinal trusted him, and therein found his advantage.

There were many stories related of him, and among them this. After a wild youth, he had retired into a convent, there to expiate, at least for some time, the follies of adolescence. On entering this holy place, the poor penitent was unable to shut the door so close as to prevent the passions he fled from entering with him. He

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was incessantly attacked by them, and the superior, to whom he had confided this misfortune, wishing as much as in him lay to free him from them, had advised him, in order to conjure away the tempting demon, to have recourse to the bell-rope, and ring with all his might. At the denunciating sound, the monks would be rendered aware that temptation was besieging a brother, and all the community would go to prayers.

This advice appeared good to the future chancellor. He conjured the evil spirit with abundance of prayers offered up by the monks. But the Devil does not suffer himself to be easily dispossessed from a place in which he has fixed his garrison. In proportion as they redoubled the exorcisms he redoubled the temptations; so that day and night the bell was ringing full swing, announcing the extreme desire for mortification which the penitent experienced.

The monks had no longer an instant of repose. By day they did nothing but ascend and descend the steps which led to the chapel; at night, in addition to complines and matins, they were further obliged to leap twenty times out of their beds and prostrate themselves on the floor of their cells.

It is not known whether it was the Devil who gave way, or the monks who grew tired; but within three months the penitent re-appeared in the world with the reputation of being the most terrible *possessed* that ever existed.

On leaving the convent he entered into the magistracy, became president in the place of his uncle, embraced the cardinal's party, which did not prove want of sagacity, became chancellor, served his Eminence with zeal in his hatred against the queen-mother and his vengeance against Anne of Austria, stimulated the judges in the affair of Chalais, encouraged the attempts of M. de Laffemas, Chief

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Gamekeeper of France; then, at length, invested with the entire confidence of the cardinal, — a confidence which he had so well earned, — he received the singular commission for the execution of which he presented himself in the queen's apartments.

The queen was still standing when he entered; but scarcely had she perceived him than she re-seated herself in her armchair, and made a sign to her women to resume their cushions and stools, and with an air of supreme hauteur, said, "What do you desire, Monsieur, and with what object do you present yourself here?"

"To make, Madame, in the name of the king, and without prejudice to the respect which I have the honor to owe to your Majesty, a close examination into all your papers."

"How, Monsieur, an investigation of my papers, — mine! Truly, this is an indignity!"

"Be kind enough to pardon me, Madame; but in this circumstance I am but the instrument which the king employs. Has not his Majesty just left you, and has he not himself asked you to prepare for this visit?"

"Search, then, Monsieur! I am a criminal, as it appears. Estefania, give up the keys of my drawers and my desks."

For form's sake the chancellor paid a visit to the pieces of furniture named; but he well knew that it was not in a piece of furniture that the queen would place the important letter she had written that day.

When the chancellor had opened and shut twenty times the drawers of the secretaries, it became necessary, whatever hesitation he might experience, — it became necessary, I say, to come to the conclusion of the affair; that is to say, to search the queen herself. The chancellor advanced, therefore, towards Anne of Austria, and said

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with a very perplexed and embarrassed air, "And now it remains for me to make the principal examination."

"What is that?" asked the queen, who did not understand, or rather was not willing to understand.

"His Majesty is certain that a letter has been written by you during the day; he knows that it has not yet been sent to its address. This letter is not in your table nor in your secretary; and yet this letter must be somewhere."

"Would you dare to lift your hand to your queen?" said Anne of Austria, drawing herself up to her full height, and fixing her eyes upon the chancellor with an expression almost threatening.

"I am a faithful subject of the king, Madame, and all that his Majesty commands I shall do."

"Well, it is true!" said Anne of Austria; "and the spies of the cardinal have served him faithfully. I have written a letter to-day; that letter is not yet gone. The letter is here." And the queen laid her beautiful hand on her bosom.

"Then give me that letter, Madame," said the chancellor.

"I will give it to none but the king, Monsieur," said Anne.

"If the king had desired that the letter should be given to him, Madame, he would have demanded it of you himself. But I repeat to you, I am charged with reclaiming it; and if you do not give it up—"

"Well?"

"He has, then, charged me to take it from you."

"How! what do you say?"

"That my orders go far, Madame; and that I am authorized to seek for the suspected paper, even on the person of your Majesty."

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"What horror!" cried the queen.

"Be kind enough, then, Madame, to act more compliantly."

"This conduct is infamously violent! Do you know that, Monsieur?"

"The king commands it, Madame; excuse me."

"I will not suffer it! No, no, I would rather die!" cried the queen, in whom the imperious blood of Spain and Austria began to rise.

The chancellor made a profound reverence. Then, with the intention quite patent of not drawing back a foot from the accomplishment of the commission with which he was charged, and as the attendant of an executioner might have done in the chamber of torture, he approached Anne of Austria, from whose eyes at the same instant sprang tears of rage.

The queen was, as we have said, of great beauty. The commission might well be called delicate; and the king had reached, in his jealousy of Buckingham, the point of not being jealous of any one else.

Without doubt the chancellor Séguier looked about at that moment for the rope of the famous bell; but not finding it he summoned his resolution, and stretched forth his hands towards the place where the queen had acknowledged the paper was to be found.

Anne of Austria took one step backwards, became so pale that it might be said she was dying, and leaning with her left hand upon a table behind her to keep herself from falling, she with her right hand drew the paper from her bosom, and held it out to the Keeper of the Seals.

"There, Monsieur, there is that letter!" cried the queen, with a broken and trembling voice; "take it, and deliver me from your odious presence."

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The chancellor, who, on his part, trembled with an emotion easily to be conceived, took the letter, bowed to the ground, and retired. The door was scarcely closed upon him, when the queen sank, half-fainting, into the arms of her women.

The chancellor carried the letter to the king without having read a single word of it. The king took it with a trembling hand, looked for the address, which was wanting, became very pale, opened it slowly, then seeing by the first words that it was addressed to the King of Spain, he read it rapidly.

It was nothing but a plan of an attack against the cardinal. The queen pressed her brother and the Emperor of Austria to appear to be wounded, as they really were, by the policy of Richelieu, — the eternal object of which was the abasement of the house of Austria, — to declare war against France, and as a condition of peace, to insist upon the dismissal of the cardinal; but as to love, there was not a single word about it in all the letter.

The king, quite delighted, inquired if the cardinal was still at the Louvre; he was told that his Eminence awaited the orders of his Majesty in the business cabinet.

The king went straight to him.

"There, Duke," said he, "you were right, and I was wrong. The whole intrigue is political, and there is not the least question of love in this letter; but on the other hand, there is abundant question of you."

The cardinal took the letter, and read it with the greatest attention; then, when he had arrived at the end of it, he read it a second time. "Well, your Majesty," said he, "you see how far my enemies go; they menace you with two wars if you do not dismiss me. In your place, in truth, sire, I should yield to such powerful instances;

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and on my part, it would be a real happiness to withdraw from public affairs."

"What say you, Duke?"

"I say, sire, that my health is sinking under these excessive struggles, and these never-ending labors. I say that according to all probability I shall not be able to undergo the fatigues of the siege of Rochelle, and that it would be far better that you should appoint there either M. de Condé, M. de Bassompierre, or some valiant gentleman whose business is war, and not me, who am a churchman, and who am constantly turned aside from my real vocation to look after matters for which I have no aptitude. You would be the happier for it at home, sire, and I do not doubt you would be the greater for it abroad."

"Monsieur Duke," said the king, "I understand you. Be satisfied, all who are named in that letter shall be punished as they deserve, even the queen herself."

"What do you say, sire? God forbid that the queen should suffer the least inconvenience or uneasiness on my account! She has always believed me, sire, to be her enemy; although your Majesty can bear witness that I have always taken her part warmly, even against you. Oh, if she betrayed your Majesty on the side of your honor, it would be quite another thing, and I should be the first to say, 'No grace, sire, — no grace for the guilty!' Happily, there is nothing of the kind, and your Majesty has just acquired a new proof of it."

"That is true, Monsieur Cardinal," said the king, "and you were right, as you always are; but the queen, not the less, deserves all my anger."

"It is you, sire, who have now incurred hers. And even if she were to be seriously offended, I could well understand it; your Majesty has treated her with a severity —"

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"It is thus I will always treat my enemies and yours, Duke, however high they may be placed, and whatever peril I may incur in acting severely towards them."

"The queen is my enemy, but is not yours, sire; on the contrary, she is a devoted, submissive, and irreproachable wife. Allow me, then, sire, to intercede for her with your Majesty."

"Let her humble herself, then, and come to me first."

"On the contrary, sire, set the example. You have committed the first wrong, since it was you who suspected the queen."

"What? I make the first advances?" said the king. "Never!"

"Sire, I entreat you to do so."

"Besides, in what manner can I make advances first?"

"By doing a thing which you know will be agreeable to her."

"What is that?"

"Give a ball; you know how much the queen loves dancing. I will answer for it, her resentment will not hold out against such an attention."

"Monsieur Cardinal, you know that I do not like worldly pleasures."

"The queen will only be the more grateful to you, as she knows your antipathy for that amusement; besides, it will be an opportunity for her to wear those beautiful diamonds which you gave her recently on her birthday, and with which she has since had no occasion to adorn herself."

"We shall see, Monsieur Cardinal, we shall see," said the king, who, in his joy at finding the queen guilty of a crime which he cared little about, and innocent of a fault of which he had great dread, was ready to make up all differences with her, — "we shall see, but upon my honor, you are too indulgent towards her."

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"Sire," said the cardinal, "leave severity to your ministers. Clemency is a royal virtue; employ it, and you will find that you derive advantage therein."

Thereupon, the cardinal, hearing the clock strike eleven, bowed lowly, asking permission of the king to retire, and supplicating him to come to a good understanding with the queen.

Anne of Austria, who, in consequence of the seizure of her letter, expected reproaches, was much astonished the next day to see the king make some attempts at reconciliation with her. Her first movement was repellent. Her womanly pride and her queenly dignity had both been so cruelly offended that she could not come round at the first advance; but, over-persuaded by the advice of her women, she at last had the appearance of beginning to forget. The king took advantage of this favorable moment to tell her that he had the intention of shortly giving a fête.

A fête was so rare a thing for poor Anne of Austria that at this announcement, as the cardinal had predicted, the last trace of her resentment disappeared, if not from her heart, at least from her countenance. She asked upon what day this fête would take place, but the king replied that he must consult the cardinal upon that head.

Indeed, every day the king asked the cardinal when this fête should take place; and every day the cardinal, under some pretext, deferred fixing it. Ten days passed away thus.

On the eighth day after the scene we have described, the cardinal received a letter with the London stamp which only contained these lines: "I have them; but I am unable to leave London for want of money. Send me five hundred pistoles, and four or five days after I have received them I shall be in Paris."

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On the same day when the cardinal received this letter the king put his customary question to him.

Richelieu counted on his fingers, and said to himself, "She will arrive, she says, four or five days after having received the money. It will require four or five days for the transmission of the money, four or five days for her to return; that makes ten days. Now, allowing for contrary winds, accidents, and a woman's weakness, there are twelve days."

"Well, Monsieur Duke," said the king, "have you made your calculations?"

"Yes, sire. To-day is the 20th of September. The aldermen of the city give a fête on the 3d of October. That will fall in wonderfully well; you will not appear to have gone out of your way to please the queen."

Then the cardinal added, "*A propos*, sire, do not forget to tell her Majesty the evening before the fête that you should like to see how her diamond studs become her."

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CHAPTER XVII.

BONACIEUX AT HOME.

It was the second time the cardinal had mentioned these diamond studs to the king. Louis XIII. was struck with this insistence, and began to fancy that this recommendation concealed some mystery.

More than once the king had been humiliated by the cardinal, whose police, without having yet attained the perfection of the modern police, was excellent, being better informed than himself, even, upon what was going on in his own household. He hoped, then, in a conversation with Anne of Austria, to obtain some information from that conversation, and afterwards to come upon his Eminence with some secret which the cardinal either knew or did not know, but which, in either case, would raise him infinitely in the eyes of his minister.

He went then to the queen, and according to custom accosted her with fresh menaces against those who surrounded her. Anne of Austria lowered her head, allowed the torrent to flow on without replying, hoping that it would cease of itself; but this was not what Louis XIII. meant. Louis XIII. wanted a discussion from which some light or other might break, convinced as he was that the cardinal had some after-thought, and was preparing for him one of those terrible surprises which his Eminence was so skilful in getting up. He arrived at this end by his persistence in accusation.

"But," cried Anne of Austria, tired of these vague

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attacks, — "but, sire, you do not tell me all that you have in your heart. What have I done, then? Let me know what crime I have committed. It is impossible that your Majesty can make all this ado about a letter written to my brother."

The king, attacked in a manner so direct, did not know what to answer; and he thought that this was the moment for expressing the desire which he was not to have made until the evening before the fête.

"Madame," said he, with dignity, "there will shortly be a ball at the Hôtel de Ville. I wish, in order to honor our worthy aldermen, you should appear in ceremonial costume, and above all, ornamented with the diamond studs which I gave you on your birthday. That is my answer."

The answer was terrible. Anne of Austria believed that Louis XIII. knew all, and that the cardinal had persuaded him to employ this long dissimulation of seven or eight days, which, likewise, was characteristic. She became excessively pale, leaned her beautiful hand upon a *console*, which hand appeared then like one of wax, and looking at the king with terror in her eyes, she was unable to reply by a single syllable.

"You hear, Madame," said the king, who enjoyed this embarrassment to its full extent, but without guessing the cause, — "You hear, Madame?"

"Yes, sire, I hear," stammered the queen.

"You will appear at this ball?"

"Yes."

"With those studs?"

"Yes."

The queen's paleness, if possible, increased; the king perceived it, and enjoyed it with that cold cruelty which was one of the worst sides of his character.

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"Then that is agreed," said the king, "and that is all I had to say to you."

"But on what day will this ball take place?" asked Anne of Austria.

Louis XIII. felt instinctively that he ought not to reply to this question, the queen having put it in an almost dying voice.

"Oh, very shortly, Madame," said he; "but I do not precisely recollect the date of the day. I will ask the cardinal."

"It was the cardinal, then, who informed you of this fête?"

"Yes, Madame," replied the astonished king; "but why do you ask that?"

"It was he who told you to invite me to appear there with these studs?"

"That is to say, Madame —"

"It was he, sire, it was he!"

"Well, and what does it signify whether it was he or I? Is there any crime in this request?"

"No, sire."

"Then you will appear?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is well," said the king, retiring, — "that is well; I count upon it."

The queen made a courtesy, less from etiquette than because her knees were sinking under her. The king went away enchanted.

"I am lost," murmured the queen, "lost! — for the cardinal knows all, and it is he who urges on the king, who as yet knows nothing, but will soon know everything. I am lost! My God, my God, my God!"

She knelt upon a cushion and prayed, with her head buried between her palpitating arms.

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In fact, her position was terrible. Buckingham had returned to London; Madame de Chevreuse was at Tours. More closely watched than ever, the queen felt certain, without knowing how to tell which, that one of her women betrayed her. Laporte could not leave the Louvre; she had not a soul in the world in whom she could confide. Thus, while contemplating the misfortune which threatened her, and the abandonment in which she was left, she broke out into sobs and tears.

"Can I be of no service to your Majesty?" said all at once a voice full of sweetness and pity.

The queen turned sharply round, for there could be no deception in the expression of that voice; it was a friend who spoke thus.

In fact, at one of the doors which opened into the queen's apartment appeared the pretty Madame Bonacieux. She had been engaged in arranging the dresses and linen in a closet when the king entered; she could not get out, and had heard all.

The queen uttered a piercing cry at finding herself surprised, — for in her trouble she did not at first recognize the young woman who had been given to her by Laporte.

"Oh, fear nothing, Madame!" said the young woman, clasping her hands and weeping herself at the queen's sorrows; "I am your Majesty's, body and soul, and however far I may be from you, however inferior may be my position, I believe I have discovered a means of extricating your Majesty from your trouble."

"You, oh, heaven, you!" cried the queen; "but look me in the face. I am betrayed on all sides. Can I confide in you?"

"Oh, Madame!" cried the young woman, falling on her knees; "upon my soul, I am ready to die for your Majesty!"

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This expression sprang from the very bottom of the heart, and like the first, there was no mistaking it.

"Yes," continued Madame Bonacieux, — "yes, there are traitors here; but by the holy name of the Virgin, I swear that no one is more devoted to your Majesty than I am. Those studs which the king speaks of, you gave them to the Duke of Buckingham, did you not? Those studs were enclosed in a little rosewood box which he held under his arm? Am I deceived? Is it not so, Madame?"

"Oh, my God, my God!" murmured the queen, whose teeth chattered with fright.

"Well, those studs," continued Madame Bonacieux, "we must have them back again."

"Yes, without doubt, it is necessary," cried the queen; "but how am I to act? How can it be effected?"

"Some one must be sent to the duke."

"But who, who? In whom can I trust?"

"Place confidence in me, Madame; do me that honor, my queen, and I will find a messenger."

"But I must write."

"Oh, yes; that is indispensable. Two words from the hand of your Majesty and your private seal."

"But these two words would bring about my condemnation, divorce, exile!"

"Yes, if they fell into infamous hands. But I will answer for these two words being delivered to their address."

"Oh, my God! I must then place my life, my honor, my reputation, in your hands?"

"Yes, yes, Madame, you must; and I will save them all."

"But how? Tell me at least the means."

"My husband has been at liberty these two or three days. I have not yet had time to see him again. He is

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a worthy, honest man who entertains neither love nor hatred for anybody. He will do anything I wish. He will set out upon receiving an order from me, without knowing what he carries, and he will carry your Majesty's letter, without even knowing it is from your Majesty, to the address which is on it."

The queen took the two hands of the young woman with a burst of emotion, gazed at her as if to read her very heart, and seeing nothing but sincerity in her beautiful eyes, embraced her tenderly.

"Do that," cried she, "and you will have saved my life, you will have saved my honor!"

"Do not exaggerate the service I have the happiness to render your Majesty. I have nothing to save for your Majesty; you are only the victim of perfidious plots."

"That is true, that is true, my child," said the queen, "you are right."

"Give me, then, that letter, Madame; time presses."

The queen ran to a little table, on which were ink, paper, and pens. She wrote two lines, sealed the letter with her private seal, and gave it to Madame Bonacieux.

"And now," said the queen, "we are forgetting one very necessary thing."

"What is that, Madame?"

"Money."

Madame Bonacieux blushed.

"Yes, that is true," said she, "and I will confess to your Majesty that my husband —"

"Your husband has none. Is that what you would say?"

"He has some, but he is very avaricious; that is his fault. Nevertheless, let not your Majesty be uneasy, we will find means."

"And I have none, either," said the queen. Those

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who have read the Memoirs of Madame de Motteville will not be astonished at this reply. "But wait a minute."

Anne of Austria ran to her jewel-case.

"Here," said she, — "here is a ring of great value, as I have been assured. It came from my brother, the King of Spain. It is mine, and I am at liberty to dispose of it. Take this ring; raise money with it, and let your husband set out."

"In an hour, you shall be obeyed."

"You see the address," said the queen, speaking so low that Madame Bonacieux could hardly hear what she said, — "To my Lord Duke of Buckingham, London."

"The letter shall be given to himself."

"Generous girl!" cried Anne of Austria.

Madame Bonacieux kissed the hands of the queen, concealed the paper in the bosom of her dress, and disappeared with the lightness of a bird.

Ten minutes afterwards she was at home. As she told the queen, she had not seen her husband since his liberation; she was ignorant of the change that had taken place in him with respect to the cardinal, — a change which had since been strengthened by two or three visits from the Comte de Rochefort, who had become the best friend of Bonacieux, and had persuaded him, without much trouble, that nothing culpable had been intended by the abduction of his wife, but that it was only a political precaution.

She found Bonacieux alone; the poor man was restoring, with much trouble, order in his house, the furniture of which he had found mostly broken, and his closets nearly empty, — justice not being one of the three things which King Solomon names as leaving no trace of its passage. As to the servant, she had run away at the moment of her master's arrest. Terror had had such an effect

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upon the poor girl that she had never ceased walking from Paris till she reached Burgundy, her native place.

The worthy mercer had, immediately upon re-entering his house, informed his wife of his happy return, and his wife had replied by congratulating him, and telling him that the first moment she could steal from her duties should be devoted to paying him a visit.

This first moment had been delayed five days, which, under any other circumstances, might have appeared rather long to M. Bonacieux; but he had, in the visit he had made to the cardinal and in the visits Rochefort had made him, ample subjects for reflection, and as everybody knows, nothing makes time pass more quickly than reflection.

This was the more so because Bonacieux's reflections were all rose-colored. Rochefort called him his friend, his dear Bonacieux, and never ceased telling him that the cardinal had a great respect for him. The mercer fancied himself already on the high road to honors and fortune.

On her side Madame Bonacieux had also reflected; but, it must be admitted, upon something widely different from ambition. In spite of herself her thoughts constantly reverted to that handsome young man who was so brave, and appeared to be so much in love. Married at eighteen to M. Bonacieux, having always lived among her husband's friends, — people little capable of inspiring any sentiment whatever in a young woman whose heart was above her position, — Madame Bonacieux had remained insensible to vulgar seductions; but at this period the title of gentleman had great influence with the citizen class, and D'Artagnan was a gentleman. Besides, he wore the uniform of the Guards, which, next to that of the Musketeers, was most admired by the ladies. He was,

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we repeat, handsome, young, and bold; he spoke of love like a man who did love, and was anxious to be loved in return. There was certainly enough in all this to turn a head only twenty-three years old, and Madame Bonacieux had just attained that happy period of life.

The couple, then, although they had not seen each other for eight days, and during that time serious events had taken place in which both were concerned, accosted each other with a degree of pre-occupation. Nevertheless, Bonacieux manifested real joy, and advanced towards his wife with open arms. Madame Bonacieux presented her cheek to him.

"Let us talk a little," said she.

"How!" said Bonacieux, astonished.

"Yes, I have something of the highest importance to tell you."

"True," said he, "and I have some questions sufficiently serious to put to you. Describe to me your abduction, I pray you."

"Oh, that's of no consequence just now," said Madame Bonacieux.

"And what does it concern, then, — my captivity?"

"I heard of it the day it happened; but as you were not guilty of any crime, as you were not guilty of any intrigue, as you, in short, knew nothing that could compromise yourself or anybody else, I attached no more importance to that event than it merited."

"You speak very much at your ease, Madame," said Bonacieux, hurt at the little interest his wife showed in him. "Do you know that I was plunged during a day and night in a dungeon of the Bastille?"

"Oh, a day and night soon pass away. Let us return to the object that brings me here."

"What, that which brings you home to me? Is it not

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the desire of seeing a husband again from whom you have been separated for a week?" asked the mercer, piqued to the quick.

"Yes, that first, and other things afterwards."

"Speak."

"It is a thing of the highest interest, and upon which our future fortune perhaps depends."

"The complexion of our fortune has changed very much since I saw you, Madame Bonacieux, and I should not be astonished if in the course of a few months it were to excite the envy of many folks."

"Yes, particularly if you follow the instructions I am about to give you."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. There is a good and holy action to be performed, Monsieur, and much money to be gained at the same time."

Madame Bonacieux knew that in talking of money to her husband, she took him on his weak side. But a man, were he even a mercer, when he has talked for ten minutes with Cardinal Richelieu, is no longer the same man.

"Much money to be gained?" said Bonacieux, protruding his lip.

"Yes, much."

"About how much?"

"A thousand pistoles, perhaps."

"What you demand of me is serious, then?"

"Yes."

"What must be done?"

"You must go away immediately. I will give you a paper which you must not part with on any account, and which you will deliver into the proper hands."

"And whither am I to go?"

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"To London."

"I go to London? Go to! You jest! I have no business in London."

"But others wish that you should go there."

"But who are those others? I warn you that I will never again work in the dark, and that I will know not only to what I expose myself, but for whom I expose myself."

"An illustrious person sends you; an illustrious person awaits you. The recompense will exceed your expectations; that is all I promise you."

"More intrigues! nothing but intrigues! Thank you, Madame, I am aware of them now; Monsieur the Cardinal has enlightened me on that head."

"The cardinal?" cried Madame Bonacieux. "Have you seen the cardinal?"

"He sent for me," answered the mercer, proudly.

"And you responded to his bidding, you imprudent man?"

"Well, I can't say I had much choice of going or not going, for I was taken to him between two guards. It is true also, that as I did not then know his Eminence, if I had been able to dispense with the visit, I should have been enchanted."

"He ill-treated you then; he threatened you?"

"He gave me his hand, and called me his friend. His friend! Do you hear that, Madame? I am the friend of the great cardinal?"

"Of the great cardinal!"

"Perhaps you would contest his right to that title, Madame?"

"I would contest nothing; but I tell you that the favor of a minister is ephemeral, and that a man must be mad to attach himself to a minister. There are powers

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above his which do not depend upon a man or the issue of an event; it is to these powers we should rally."

"I am sorry for it, Madame, but I acknowledge no other power but that of the great man whom I have the honor to serve."

"You serve the cardinal?"

"Yes, Madame; and as his servant, I will not allow you to be concerned in plots against the safety of the State, or to serve the intrigues of a woman who is not French, and who has a Spanish heart. Fortunately, we have the great cardinal; his vigilant eye watches over and penetrates to the bottom of the heart."

Bonacieux was repeating, word for word, a sentence which he had heard from the Comte de Rochefort; but the poor wife, who had reckoned on her husband, and who, in that hope, had answered for him to the queen, did not tremble the less, both at the danger into which she had nearly cast herself, and at the helpless state to which she was reduced. Nevertheless, knowing the weakness of her husband, and more particularly his cupidity, she did not despair of bringing him round to her purpose.

"Ah, you are a cardinalist, then, Monsieur, are you," cried she; "and you serve the party of those who maltreat your wife, and insult your queen?"

"Private interests are as nothing before the interests of all. I am for those who save the State," said Bonacieux, emphatically.

This was another of the Comte de Rochefort's phrases which he had retained, and which he took occasion to make use of.

"And what do you know about the State you talk of?" said Madame Bonacieux, shrugging her shoulders. "Be satisfied with being a plain, straightforward citizen, and turn to that side which offers the most advantages."

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"Eh, eh!" said Bonacieux, slapping a plump, round bag, which returned a sound of money; "what do you think of this, Madame preacher?"

"Whence comes that money?"

"You do not guess?"

"From the cardinal?"

"From him, and from my friend the Comte de Rochefort."

"The Comte de Rochefort! Why, it was he who carried me off!"

"That may be, Madame!"

"And you receive silver from that man!"

"Have you not said that that abduction was entirely political?"

"Yes; but that abduction had for its object the betrayal of my mistress, to draw from me by torture confessions that might compromise the honor, and perhaps the life, of my august mistress."

"Madame," replied Bonacieux, "your august mistress is a perfidious Spaniard, and what the cardinal does is well done."

"Monsieur," said the young woman, "I know you to be cowardly, avaricious, and foolish, but I never till now believed you infamous!"

"Madame," said Bonacieux, who had never seen his wife in a passion, and who recoiled before this conjugal anger, — "Madame, what do you say?"

"I say you are a miserable creature!" continued Madame Bonacieux, who saw she was regaining some little influence over her husband. "You meddle with politics, do you, — and still more, with cardinalist politics? Why, you sell yourself, body and soul, to the demon, the Devil, for money!"

"No, to the cardinal."

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"It's the same thing," cried the young woman. "Who calls Richelieu calls Satan."

"Hold your tongue, hold your tongue, Madame! You may be overheard."

"Yes, you are right; I should be ashamed for any one to know your baseness."

"But what do you require of me, then? Let us see."

"I have told you. You must depart instantly, Monsieur. You must accomplish loyally the commission with which I deign to charge you, and on that condition I pardon everything, I forget everything; and what is more," and she held out her hand to him, "I restore my love."

Bonacieux was cowardly and avaricious, but he loved his wife. He was softened. A man of fifty cannot long bear malice with a wife of twenty-three. Madame Bonacieux saw that he hesitated.

"Come! Have you decided?" said she.

"But my dear love, reflect a little upon what you require of me. London is far from Paris, very far, and perhaps the commission with which you charge me is not without dangers?"

"What matters it, if you avoid them?"

"Hold, Madame Bonacieux," said the mercer, "hold! I positively refuse; intrigues terrify me. I have seen the Bastille. My! whew! that's a frightful place, that Bastille! Only to think of it makes my flesh crawl. They threatened me with torture. Do you know what the torture is? Wooden points that they stick in between your legs till your bones stick out! No, positively I will not go. And, *morbleu*, why do you not go yourself? For, in truth, I think I have hitherto been deceived in you. I really believe you are a man, and a violent one too."

"And you, you are a woman, — a miserable woman, stupid and brutal. You are afraid, are you? Well, if you

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do not go this very instant, I will have you arrested by the queen's orders, and I will have you placed in that Bastille which you dread so much."

Bonacieux fell into a profound reflection. He weighed the two angers in his brain, — that of the cardinal and that of the queen; that of the cardinal predominated enormously.

"Have me arrested on the part of the queen," said he, "and I, — I will appeal to his Eminence."

At once Madame Bonacieux saw that she had gone too far, and she was terrified at having communicated so much. She for a moment contemplated with fright that stupid countenance, impressed with the invincible resolution of a fool that is overcome by fear.

"Well, be it so!" said she. "Perhaps, when all is considered, you are right. In the long run, a man knows more about politics than a woman, particularly such as, like you, M. Bonacieux, have conversed with the cardinal. And yet it is very hard," added she, "that a man upon whose affection I thought I might depend, treats me thus unkindly, and will not comply with any of my fancies."

"That is because your fancies go too far," replied the triumphant Bonacieux, "and I mistrust them."

"Well, I will give it up, then," said the young woman, sighing. "It is as well as it is; say no more about it."

"At least you should tell me what I should have to do in London," replied Bonacieux, who remembered a little too late that Rochefort had desired him to endeavor to surprise his wife's secrets.

"It is of no use for you to know anything about it," said the young woman, whom an instinctive mistrust now impelled to draw back. "It was about one of those purchases that interest women, — a purchase by which much might have been gained."

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But the more the young woman excused herself, the more important Bonacieux thought the secret which she declined to confide to him. He resolved then to hasten immediately to the residence of the Comte de Rochefort, and tell him that the queen was seeking for a messenger to send to London.

"Pardon me for quitting you, my dear Madame Bonacieux," said he; "but not knowing you would come to see me, I had made an engagement with a friend. I shall soon return; and if you will wait only a few minutes for me, as soon as I have concluded my business with that friend, as it is growing late, I will come back, and reconduct you to the Louvre."

"Thank you, Monsieur, you are not brave enough to be of any use to me whatever," replied Madame Bonacieux. "I shall return very safely to the Louvre all alone."

"As you please, Madame Bonacieux," said the ex-mercer. "Shall I see you again soon?"

"Next week I hope my duties will afford me a little liberty, and I will take advantage of it to come and put things in order here, as they must necessarily be much deranged."

"Very well; I shall expect you. You are not angry with me?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Till then, then?"

"Till then."

Bonacieux kissed his wife's hand, and set off at a quick pace.

"Well," said Madame Bonacieux, when her husband had shut the street door and she found herself alone; "that imbecile lacked but one thing to become a cardinalist. And I, who have answered for him to the queen, — I, who have promised my poor mistress, — ah, my God,

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my God! She will take me for one of those wretches with whom the palace swarms, and who are placed about her as spies! Ah, M. Bonacieux, I never did love you much, but now it is worse than ever. I hate you, and on my word you shall pay for this!"

At the moment she spoke these words a rap on the ceiling made her raise her head, and a voice which reached her through the ceiling, cried, "Dear Madame Bonacieux, open for me the little door on the alley, and I will come down to you."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOVER AND THE HUSBAND.

"Ah, Madame," said D'Artagnan, entering by the door which the young woman opened for him, "allow me to tell you that you have a bad sort of a husband."

"You have then overheard our conversation?" asked Madame Bonacieux, eagerly, and looking at D'Artagnan with disquiet.

"The whole."

"But how, my God?"

"By a mode of proceeding known to myself, and by which I likewise overheard the more animated conversation which you had with the cardinal's police."

"And what did you understand by what we said?"

"A thousand things. In the first place, that, fortunately, your husband is a simpleton and a fool; in the next place, you are in trouble, of which I am very glad, as it gives me an opportunity of placing myself at your service, and God knows I am ready to throw myself into the fire for you; finally, that the queen wants a brave, intelligent, devoted man to make a journey to London for her. I have, at least, two of the three qualities you stand in need of, and here I am."

Madame Bonacieux made no reply; but her heart beat with joy and secret hope shone in her eyes.

"And what guarantee will you give me," asked she, "if I consent to confide this message to you?"

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"My love for you. Speak! Command! What is to be done?"

"My God, my God!" murmured the young woman, "ought I to confide such a secret to you, Monsieur? You are almost a boy."

"I see that you require some one to answer for me?"

"I admit that would re-assure me greatly."

"Do you know Athos?"

"No."

"Porthos?"

"No."

"Aramis?"

"No. Who are these gentlemen?"

"Three of the king's Musketeers. Do you know M. de Tréville, their captain?"

"Oh, yes, him! I know him; not personally, but from having heard the queen speak of him more than once as a brave and loyal gentleman."

"You do not fear lest he should betray you to the cardinal?"

"Oh, no, certainly not!"

"Well, reveal your secret to him, and ask him whether, however important, however valuable, however terrible it may be, you may not confide it to me."

"But this secret is not mine, and I cannot reveal it in this manner."

"You were about to confide it to M. Bonacieux," said D'Artagnan, with chagrin.

"As one confides a letter to the hollow of a tree, to the wing of a pigeon, to the collar of a dog."

"And yet, me, — you see plainly that I love you."

"You say so."

"I am an honorable man."

"You say so."

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"I am a gallant fellow."

"I believe it."

"I am brave."

"Oh, I am sure of that!"

"Then, put me to the proof."

Madame Bonacieux looked at the young man, restrained for a minute by a last hesitation; but there was such an ardor in his eyes, such persuasion in his voice, that she felt herself constrained to confide in him. Besides, she found herself in circumstances where everything must be risked for the sake of everything. The queen might be as much injured by too much reticence as by too much confidence; and — let us admit it — the involuntary sentiment which she felt for her young protector decided her to speak.

"Listen," said she; "I yield to your protestations, I yield to your assurances. But I swear to you, before God who hears us, that if you betray me, and my enemies pardon me, I will kill myself, while accusing you of my death."

"And I, — I swear to you before God, Madame," said D'Artagnan, "that if I am taken while accomplishing the orders you give me, I will die sooner than do anything or say anything that may compromise any one."

Then the young woman confided to him the terrible secret of which chance had already communicated to him a part in front of the Samaritaine. This was their mutual declaration of love.

D'Artagnan was radiant with joy and pride. This secret which he possessed, this woman whom he loved! Confidence and love made him a giant.

"I go," said he; "I go at once."

"How, you will go!" said Madame Bonacieux; "and your regiment, your captain?"

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"By my soul, you had made me forget all that, dear Constance! Yes, you are right; a furlough is needful."

"Still another obstacle," murmured Madame Bonacieux, sorrowfully.

"As to that," cried D'Artagnan, after a moment of reflection, "I shall surmount it, be assured."

"How so?"

"I will go this very evening to Tréville, whom I will request to ask this favor for me of his brother-in-law, M. d'Essart."

"But another thing."

"What?" asked D'Artagnan, seeing that Madame Bonacieux hesitated to continue.

"You have, perhaps, no money?"

"*Perhaps* is too much," said D'Artagnan, smiling.

"Then," replied Madame Bonacieux, opening a cupboard, and taking from it the very bag which a half-hour before her husband had caressed so affectionately, "take this bag."

"The cardinal's?" cried D'Artagnan, breaking into a loud laugh, he having heard, as may be remembered, thanks to the broken boards, every syllable of the conversation between the mercer and his wife.

"The cardinal's," replied Madame Bonacieux. "You see it makes a very respectable appearance."

"*Pardieu*," cried D'Artagnan, "it will be a doubly amusing affair, to save the queen with the cardinal's money!"

"You are an amiable and charming young man," said Madame Bonacieux. "Be assured you will not find her Majesty ungrateful."

"Oh, I am already grandly recompensed!" cried D'Artagnan. "I love you; you permit me to tell you that I do, — that is already more happiness than I dared to hope."

"Silence!" said Madame Bonacieux, starting.

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What!"

"Some one is talking in the street."

"It is the voice of —"

"Of my husband! Yes; I recognize it!"

D'Artagnan ran to the door and pushed the bolt.

"He shall not come in before I am gone," said he; "and when I am gone, you can open to him."

"But I ought to be gone, too. And the disappearance of this money; how am I to justify it if I am here?"

"You are right; we must go out."

"Go out? How? He will see us if we go out."

"Then you must come up into my room."

"Ah," said Madame Bonacieux, "you speak that in a tone that frightens me!"

Madame Bonacieux pronounced these words with tears in her eyes. D'Artagnan saw those tears, and much disturbed, softened, he threw himself at her feet.

"With me you will be as safe as in a temple; I give you my word of a gentleman."

"Let us go," said she, "I place full confidence in you, my friend!"

D'Artagnan drew back the bolt with precaution, and both, light as shadows, glided through the interior door into the passage, ascended the stairs as quietly as possible, and entered D'Artagnan's chambers.

Once there, for greater security, the young man barricaded the door. They both approached the window, and through a slit in the shutter they saw Bonacieux talking with a man in a cloak.

At sight of this man D'Artagnan started, and half drawing his sword, sprang towards the door.

It was the man of Meung.

"What are you going to do?" cried Madame Bonacieux; "you will ruin us all!"

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"But I have sworn to kill that man!" said D'Artagnan.

"Your life is devoted from this moment, and does not belong to you. In the name of the queen I forbid you to throw yourself into any peril which is foreign to that of your journey."

"And do you command nothing in your own name?"

"In my name," said Madame Bonacieux, with great emotion, — "in my name I beg you! But listen; they appear to be speaking of me."

D'Artagnan drew near the window, and lent his ear.

M. Bonacieux had opened his door, and seeing the appartement empty, had returned to the man in the cloak, whom he had left alone for an instant.

"She is gone," said he; "she must have returned to the Louvre."

"You are sure," replied the stranger, "that she did not suspect the intentions with which you went out?"

"No," replied Bonacieux, with a self-sufficient air, "she is too superficial a woman."

"Is the young guardsman at home?"

"I do not think he is; as you see, his shutter is closed, and you can see no light shine through the chinks of the shutters."

"All the same, it is as well to be certain."

"How so?"

"By knocking at his door. Go."

"I will ask his servant."

Bonacieux re-entered the house, passed through the same door that had afforded a passage for the two fugitives, went up to D'Artagnan's door, and knocked.

No one answered. Porthos, in order to make a greater display, had that evening borrowed Planchet. As to D'Artagnan, he took care not to give the least sign of existence.

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The moment the hand of Bonacieux sounded on the door, the two young people felt their hearts bound within them.

"There is nobody within," said Bonacieux.

"Never mind. Let us return to your appartement. We shall be safer there than in the doorway."

"Ah, my God!" whispered Madame Bonacieux, "we shall hear no more."

"On the contrary," said D'Artagnan, "we shall hear better."

D'Artagnan raised the three or four boards which made his chamber another ear of Dionysius, spread a carpet on the floor, went down upon his knees, and made a sign to Madame Bonacieux to stoop as he did towards the opening.

"You are sure there is nobody there?" said the unknown.

"I will answer for it," said Bonacieux.

"And you think that your wife —"

"Has returned to the Louvre."

"Without speaking to any one but yourself?"

"I am sure of it."

"That is an important point, do you understand?"

"Then the news I brought you is of value?"

"The greatest, my dear Bonacieux; I don't conceal this from you."

"Then the cardinal will be pleased with me?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"The great cardinal!"

"Are you sure, in her conversation with you, that your wife mentioned no names?"

"I think not."

"She did not name Madame de Chevreuse, the Duke of Buckingham, or Madame de Vernel?"

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"No; she only told me she wished to send me to London to serve the interests of an illustrious personage."

"The traitor!" murmured Madame Bonacieux.

"Silence!" said D'Artagnan, taking her hand, which, without thinking of it, she abandoned to him.

"Never mind," continued the man in the cloak; "you were a fool not to have pretended to accept the mission. You would then be in present possession of the letter. The State, which is now threatened, would be safe, and you —"

"And I?"

"Well, you, — the cardinal would have given you letters of nobility."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Yes, I know that he meant to afford you that agreeable surprise."

"Be satisfied," replied Bonacieux; "my wife adores me, and there is yet time."

"The ninny!" murmured Madame Bonacieux.

"Silence!" said D'Artagnan, pressing her hand more closely.

"How is there still time?" asked the man in the cloak.

"I go to the Louvre; I ask for Madame Bonacieux; I say that I have reflected; I renew the affair; I obtain the letter, and I run directly to the cardinal."

"Well, go quickly! I will return soon to learn the result of your trip."

The unknown went out.

"Infamous!" said Madame Bonacieux, addressing this epithet to her husband.

"Silence!" said D'Artagnan, pressing her hand still more warmly.

A terrible howling interrupted these reflections of D'Ar-

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tagnan and Madame Bonacieux. It was her husband, who had discovered the disappearance of his money-bag, and was crying, "Thieves!"

"Oh, my God," cried Madame Bonacieux, "he will rouse the whole quarter."

Bonacieux called a long time; but as such cries, on account of their frequency, brought nobody in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, and as lately the mercer's house had a bad name, finding that nobody came, he went out continuing to call, his voice being heard fainter and fainter as he went in the direction of the Rue du Bac.

"Now he is gone, it is your turn to get out," said Madame Bonacieux. "Courage, my friend, but above all, prudence, and think what you owe to the queen."

"To her and to you!" cried D'Artagnan. "Be satisfied, beautiful Constance. I shall become worthy of her gratitude; but shall I likewise return worthy of your love?"

The young woman only replied by the beautiful glow which mounted to her cheeks. A few seconds afterwards D'Artagnan also went out enveloped in a large cloak, which ill-concealed the sheath of a long sword.

Madame Bonacieux followed him with her eyes, with that long, fond look with which a woman accompanies the man she loves; but when he had turned the angle of the street, she fell on her knees, and clasping her hands, "Oh, my God," cried she, "protect the queen, protect me!"

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CHAPTER XIX.

PLAN OF THE CAMPAIGN.

D'ARTAGNAN went straight to M. de Tréville's. He had reflected that in a few minutes the cardinal would be warned by this cursed unknown, who appeared to be his agent, and he judged, with reason, he had not a moment to lose.

The heart of the young man overflowed with joy. An opportunity presented itself to him in which there would be at the same time glory to be acquired, and money to be gained; and as a far higher encouragement, it brought him into close intimacy with a woman he adored. This chance did then for him at once more than he would have dared to ask of Providence.

M. de Tréville was in his saloon with his habitual court of gentlemen. D'Artagnan, who was known as a familiar of the house, went straight to his office, and sent word that he wished to see him on something of importance.

D'Artagnan had been there scarcely five minutes when M. de Tréville entered. At the first glance, and by the joy which was painted on his countenance, the worthy captain plainly perceived that something new was on foot.

All the way along D'Artagnan had been consulting with himself whether he should place confidence in M. de Tréville, or whether he should only ask him to give him *carte blanche* for some secret affair. But M. de Tréville had always been so thoroughly his friend, had always been so

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devoted to the king and queen, and hated the cardinal so cordially, that the young man resolved to tell him everything.

"Did you ask for me, my young friend?" said M. de Tréville.

"Yes, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan. "You will pardon me, I hope, for having disturbed you, when you know the importance of my business."

"Speak, then; I listen to you."

"It concerns nothing less," said D'Artagnan, lowering his voice, "than the honor, perhaps the life, of the queen."

"What do you say?" asked M. de Tréville, glancing round to see if they were surely alone, and then fixing his questioning look upon D'Artagnan.

"I say, Monsieur, that chance has rendered me master of a secret —"

"Which you will guard, I hope, young man, as your life."

"But which I must impart to you, Monsieur, for you alone can assist me in the mission I have just received from her Majesty."

"Is this secret your own?"

"No, Monsieur; it is her Majesty's."

"Are you authorized by her Majesty to communicate it to me?"

"No, Monsieur, for on the contrary, I am desired to preserve the profoundest mystery."

"Why, then, are you about to betray it to me?"

"Because, as I said, without you I can do nothing; and I am afraid you will refuse me the favor I come to ask, if you do not know to what end I ask it."

"Keep your secret, young man, and tell me what you wish."

"I wish you to obtain for me, from M. d'Essart, leave of absence for fifteen days."

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"When?"

"This very night."

"You leave Paris?"

"I am going on a mission."

"May you tell me whither?"

"To London."

"Has any one an interest in preventing your arrival there?"

"The cardinal, I believe, would give the world to prevent my success."

"And you are going alone?"

"I am going alone."

"In that case you will not get beyond Bondy. I tell you so, by the faith of De Tréville."

"How so?"

"You will be assassinated."

"And I shall die in the performance of my duty."

"But your mission will not be accomplished."

"That is true," replied D'Artagnan.

"Believe me," continued Tréville, "in enterprises of this kind, in order that one may arrive, four must set out."

"Ah, you are right, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan; "but you know Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and you know if I can dispose of them."

"Without confiding to them the secret which I am not willing to know?"

"We are sworn, once for all, to implicit confidence and devotedness against all proof. Besides, you can tell them that you have full confidence in me, and they will not be more incredulous than you."

"I can send to each of them leave of absence for fifteen days, that is all, — to Athos, whose wound still makes him suffer, to go to the waters of Forges; to Porthos and Aramis to accompany their friend, whom they are not

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willing to abandon in such a painful condition. Sending their leave of absence will be proof enough that I authorize their journey."

"Thanks, Monsieur. You are a hundred times too good."

"Begone, then, find them instantly, and let all be done to-night! Ha! but first write your request to D'Essart. Perhaps you had a spy at your heels; and your visit, if it should ever be known to the cardinal, will thus seem legitimate."

D'Artagnan drew up his request, and M. de Tréville, on receiving it, assured him that by two o'clock in the morning the four leaves of absence should be at the respective domiciles of the travellers.

"Have the goodness to send mine to Athos's residence. I should dread some disagreeable encounter if I were to go home."

"Be easy. Adieu, and a prosperous voyage. *À propos*," said M. de Tréville, calling him back.

D'Artagnan returned.

"Have you any money?"

D'Artagnan tapped the bag he had in his pocket.

"Enough?" asked M. de Tréville.

"Three hundred pistoles."

"Oh, plenty! That would carry you to the end of the world. Begone, then!"

D'Artagnan saluted M. de Tréville, who held out his hand to him; D'Artagnan pressed it with a respect mixed with gratitude. Since his first arrival at Paris, he had had constant occasion to honor this excellent man, whom he had always found worthy, loyal, and great.

His first visit was to Aramis, at whose residence he had not been since the famous evening on which he had followed Madame Bonacieux. Still further, he had seldom

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seen the young musketeer; but every time he had seen him, he had remarked a deep sadness imprinted on his countenance.

This evening especially, Aramis was melancholy and thoughtful. D'Artagnan asked some questions about this prolonged melancholy. Aramis pleaded as his excuse a commentary upon the eighteenth chapter of Saint Augustine, which he was forced to write in Latin for the following week, and which pre-occupied him a good deal.

After the two friends had been chatting a few moments, a servant from M. de Tréville entered, bringing a sealed packet.

"What is that?" asked Aramis.

"The leave of absence Monsieur has asked for," replied the lackey.

"For me! I have asked for no leave of absence."

"Hold your tongue and take it!" said D'Artagnan. "And you, my friend, there is a demi-pistole for your trouble; you will tell M. de Tréville that M. Aramis is very much obliged to him. Go."

The lackey bowed to the ground and departed.

"What does all this mean?" asked Aramis.

"Pack up all you want for a journey of a fortnight, and follow me."

"But I cannot leave Paris, just now, without knowing—"

Aramis stopped.

"What is become of her? I suppose you mean—" continued D'Artagnan.

"Become of whom?" replied Aramis.

"The woman who was here,—the woman with the embroidered handkerchief."

"Who told you there was a woman here?" replied Aramis, becoming as pale as death.

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"I saw her."

"And you know who she is?"

"I believe I can guess, at least."

"Listen!" said Aramis. "Since you appear to know so many things, can you tell me what is become of that woman?"

"I presume that she has returned to Tours."

"To Tours? Yes, that may be. You evidently know her. But why did she return to Tours without telling me anything?"

"Because she was in fear of being arrested."

"Why has she not written to me, then?"

"Because she was afraid of compromising you."

"D'Artagnan, you restore me to life!" cried Aramis. "I fancied myself despised, betrayed. I was so delighted to see her again! I could not have believed she would risk her liberty for me, and yet for what other cause could she have returned to Paris?"

"For the cause which to-day takes us to England."

"And what is this cause?" demanded Aramis.

"Oh, you 'll know it some day, Aramis; but at present I must imitate the discretion of 'the doctor's niece.'"

Aramis smiled, as he remembered the tale he had told his friends on a certain evening. "Well, then, since she has left Paris, and you are sure of it, D'Artagnan, nothing prevents me, and I am ready to follow you. You say we are going —"

"To see Athos now, and if you will come thither, I beg you to make haste, for we have lost much time already. *À propos*, inform Bazin."

"Will Bazin go with us?" asked Aramis.

"Perhaps so. At all events, it is best that he should follow us to Athos's."

Aramis called Bazin, and after having ordered him to

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join them at Athos's residence, said, "Let us go, then," at the same time taking his cloak, sword, and three pistols, opening uselessly two or three drawers to see if he could not find stray coin. When well assured this search was superfluous, he followed D'Artagnan, wondering to himself how this young guardsman should know so well who the lady was to whom he had given hospitality, and that he should know better than himself what was become of her.

Only as they went out Aramis placed his hand upon the arm of D'Artagnan, and looking at him earnestly, "You have not spoken of this lady?" said he.

"To nobody in the world."

"Not even to Athos or Porthos?"

"I have not breathed a syllable to them."

"Good enough!"

Tranquil on this important point, Aramis continued his way with D'Artagnan, and both soon arrived at Athos's dwelling. They found him holding his leave of absence in one hand, and M. de Tréville's note in the other.

"Can you explain to me what signify this leave of absence and this letter, which I have just received?" said the astonished Athos.

MY DEAR ATHOS, — I wish, as your health absolutely requires it, that you should rest for a fortnight. Go, then, and take the waters of Forges, or any that may be more agreeable to you, and recuperate yourself as quickly as possible.

Your affectionate

DE TRÉVILLE.

"Well, this leave of absence and that letter mean that you must follow me, Athos."

"To the waters of Forges?"

"There or elsewhere."

"In the king's service?"

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"Either the king's or the queen's. Are we not their Majesties' servants?"

At that moment Porthos entered. "*Pardieu!*" said he, "here is a strange thing! Since when, I wonder, in the Musketeers, did they grant men leave of absence without their asking for it."

"Since," said D'Artagnan, "they have friends who ask it for them."

"Ah, ah!" said Porthos, "it appears there's something fresh here."

"Yes, we are going —" said Aramis.

"To what country?" demanded Porthos.

"My faith, I don't know much about it," said Athos. "Ask D'Artagnan."

"To London, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan.

"To London!" cried Porthos; "and what the devil are we going to do in London?"

"That is what I am not at liberty to tell you, gentlemen; you must trust to me."

"But in order to go to London," added Porthos, "money is needed, and I have none."

"Nor I," said Aramis.

"Nor I," said Athos.

"I have," replied D'Artagnan, pulling out his treasure from his pocket, and placing it on the table. "There are in this bag three hundred pistoles. Let each take seventy-five; that is enough to take us to London and back. Besides, make yourselves easy; we shall not all arrive at London."

"Why so?"

"Because, in all probability, some one of us will be left on the road."

"Is this, then, a campaign upon which we are now entering?"

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"One of a most dangerous kind, I give you notice."

"Ah! but if we do risk being killed," said Porthos, "at least I should like to know what for."

"You would be all the wiser," said Athos.

"And yet," said Aramis, "I am somewhat of Porthos's opinion."

"Is the king accustomed to give you such reasons? No. He says to you jauntily, 'Gentlemen, there is fighting going on in Gascony or in Flanders; go and fight,' and you go there. Why? You need give yourselves no more uneasiness about this."

"D'Artagnan is right," said Athos; "here are our three leaves of absence which came from M. de Tréville, and here are three hundred pistoles which came from I don't know where. So let us go and get killed where we are told to go. Is life worth the trouble of so many questions? D'Artagnan, I am ready to follow you."

"And I also," said Porthos.

"And I also," said Aramis. "And indeed, I am not sorry to quit Paris; I had need of distraction."

"Well, you will have distractions enough, gentlemen, be assured," said D'Artagnan.

"And, now, when are we to go?" asked Athos.

"Immediately," replied D'Artagnan; "we have not a minute to lose."

"Hello! Grimaud! Planchet! Mousqueton! Bazin!" cried the four young men, calling their lackeys, "clean my boots, and fetch the horses from the hôtel."

Each musketeer was accustomed to leave at the general hôtel, as at a barrack, his own horse and that of his lackey. Planchet, Grimaud, Mousqueton, and Bazin set off at full speed.

"Now let us lay down the plan of the campaign," said Porthos. "Where do we go first?"

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"To Calais," said D'Artagnan; "that is the most direct line to London."

"Well," said Porthos, "this is my advice —"

"Speak!"

"Four men travelling together would be suspected. D'Artagnan will give each of us his instructions. I will go by the way of Boulogne to clear the way; Athos will set out two hours after, by that of Amiens; Aramis will follow us by that of Noyon; as to D'Artagnan, he will go by what route he thinks best, in Planchet's clothes, while Planchet will follow us like D'Artagnan, in the uniform of the Guards."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "my opinion is that it is not proper to allow lackeys to have anything to do in such an affair. A secret may, by chance, be betrayed by gentlemen; but it is almost always sold by lackeys."

"Porthos's plan appears to me to be impracticable," said D'Artagnan, "inasmuch as I am myself ignorant of what instructions I can give you. I am the bearer of a letter, that is all. I have not, and I cannot make three copies of that letter, because it is sealed. We must, then, as it appears to me, travel in company. This letter is here, in this pocket," and he pointed to the pocket which contained the letter. "If I should be killed, one of you must take it, and continue the route; if he be killed, it will be another's turn, and so on, — provided a single one arrives, that is all that is required."

"Bravo, D'Artagnan, your opinion is mine," cried Athos. "Besides, we must be consistent; I am going to take the waters, you will accompany me. Instead of taking the waters of Forges, I go and take sea waters; I am free to do so. If any one wishes to stop us, I will show M. de Tréville's letter, and you will show your leaves of absence. If we are attacked, we will defend ourselves;

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if we are tried, we will stoutly maintain that we were only anxious to dip ourselves a certain number of times in the sea. They would have an easy bargain of four isolated men; whereas four men together make a troop. We will arm our four lackeys with pistols and musketoons; if they send an army out against us, we will give battle, and the survivor, as D'Artagnan says, will carry the letter."

"Well said," cried Aramis; "you don't often speak, Athos, but when you do speak, it is like Saint John of the Golden Mouth. I adopt Athos's plan. And you, Porthos?"

"I agree to it too," said Porthos, "if D'Artagnan approves of it. D'Artagnan, being the bearer of the letter, is naturally the head of the enterprise; let him decide, and we will execute."

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "I decide that we should adopt Athos's plan, and that we set off in half-an-hour."

"Agreed!" shouted the three musketeers in chorus.

Each one, stretching out his hand to the bag, took his seventy-five pistoles, and made his preparations to set out at the time appointed.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE JOURNEY.

At two o'clock in the morning, our four adventurers left Paris by the Barrière St. Denis. As long as it was dark they remained silent; in spite of themselves they submitted to the influence of the obscurity, and apprehended ambushes on every side.

With the first rays of day their tongues were loosened; with the sun gayety revived. It was like the eve of a battle; the heart beat, the eyes laughed, and they felt that the life they were perhaps going to lose, was, after all, a good thing.

Besides, the appearance of the caravan was formidable. The black horses of the musketeers, their martial carriage, with the regimental step of these noble companions of the soldier, would have betrayed the most strict incognito. The lackeys followed, armed to the teeth.

All went well till they arrived at Chantilly, which they reached about eight o'clock in the morning. They needed breakfast, and alighted at the door of an *auberge*, recommended by a sign representing Saint Martin giving half his cloak to a poor man. They ordered the lackeys not to unsaddle the horses, and to hold themselves in readiness to set off again immediately.

They entered the common hall, and placed themselves at table. A gentleman, who had just arrived by the route of Dampmartin, was seated at the same table, and was breakfasting. He opened the conversation about

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rain and fine weather; the travellers replied. He drank to their good health, and the travellers returned his politeness.

But at the moment Mousqueton came to announce that the horses were ready, and they were arising from table, the stranger proposed to Porthos to drink the health of the cardinal. Porthos replied that he asked no better, if the stranger, in his turn, would drink the health of the king. The stranger cried that he acknowledged no other king but his Eminence. Porthos called him drunk, and the stranger drew his sword.

"You have committed a piece of folly," said Athos, "but it can't be helped; there is no drawing back. Kill the fellow, and rejoin us as soon as you can."

All three re-mounted their horses, and set out at a good pace, while Porthos was promising his adversary to perforate him with all the thrusts known in the fencing-schools.

"There goes one!" cried Athos, at the end of five hundred paces.

"But why did that man attack Porthos, rather than any other one of us?" asked Aramis.

"Because, as Porthos was talking louder than the rest of us, he took him for the chief," said D'Artagnan.

"I always said that this cadet from Gascony was a well of wisdom," murmured Athos; and the travellers continued their route.

At Beauvais they stopped two hours, as well to breathe their horses a little, as to wait for Porthos. At the end of the two hours, as Porthos did not come, nor any news of him, they resumed their journey.

At a league from Beauvais, where the road was confined between two high banks, they fell in with eight or ten men who, taking advantage of the road being unpaved in

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this spot, appeared to be employed in digging holes and filling up the ruts with mud.

Aramis, not liking to soil his boots with this artificial mortar, apostrophized them rather sharply. Athos wished to restrain him, but it was too late. The laborers began to jeer the travellers, and by their insolence disturbed the equanimity even of the cool Athos, who urged on his horse against one of them.

Then each of these men retreated as far as the ditch, from which each took a concealed musket; the result was that our seven travellers were outnumbered in weapons. Aramis received a ball which passed through his shoulder, and Mousqueton another ball which lodged in the fleshy part which prolongs the lower portion of the loins. Therefore Mousqueton alone fell from his horse, not because he was severely wounded, but not being able to see the wound, he judged it to be more serious than it really was.

"It is an ambuscade!" shouted D'Artagnan. "Don't waste a charge! Forward!"

Aramis, wounded as he was, seized the mane of his horse, which carried him on with the others. Mousqueton's horse rejoined them, and galloped by the side of his companions.

"That will serve us for a relay," said Athos.

"I would rather have had a hat," said D'Artagnan. "Mine was carried away by a ball. By my faith, it is very fortunate that the letter was not in it."

"They 'll kill poor Porthos when he comes up," said Aramis.

"If Porthos were on his legs, he would have rejoined us by this time," said Athos. "My opinion is that on the ground the drunken man was not intoxicated."

They continued at their best speed for two hours,

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although the horses were so fatigued that it was to be feared they would soon refuse service.

The travellers had chosen cross-roads, in the hope that they might meet with less interruption; but at Crèvecœur, Aramis declared he could proceed no farther. In fact, it required all the courage which he concealed beneath his elegant form and polished manners to bear him so far. He grew more pale every minute, and they were obliged to support him on his horse. They lifted him off at the door of a cabaret, left Bazin with him, who, besides, in a skirmish was more embarrassing than useful, and set forward again in the hope of sleeping at Amiens.

"*Morbleu*," said Athos, as soon as they were again in motion, "reduced to two masters and Grimaud and Planchet! *Morbleu!* I won't be their dupe, I will answer for it. I will neither open my mouth nor draw my sword between this and Calais. I swear by —"

"Don't waste time in swearing," said D'Artagnan; "let us gallop, if our horses will consent."

And the travellers buried their rowels in their horses' flanks, who thus vigorously stimulated recovered their energies. They arrived at Amiens at midnight, and alighted at the *auberge* of the Golden Lily.

The host had the appearance of as honest a man as any on earth. He received the travellers with his candlestick in one hand and his cotton nightcap in the other. He wished to lodge the two travellers each in a charming chamber; but unfortunately these charming chambers were at the opposite extremities of the hôtel. D'Artagnan and Athos refused them. The host replied that he had no other worthy of their Excellencies; but the travellers declared they would sleep in the common chamber, each on a mattress which might be thrown upon the ground.

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The host insisted; but the travellers were firm, and he was obliged to do as they wished.

They had just prepared their beds and barricaded their door within, when some one knocked at the yard-shutter; they demanded who was there, and recognizing the voices of their lackeys, opened the shutter. It was indeed Planchet and Grimaud.

"Grimaud can take care of the horses," said Planchet. "If you are willing, gentlemen, I will sleep across your doorway, and you will then be certain that nobody can reach you."

"And on what will you sleep?" said D'Artagnan.

"Here is my bed," replied Planchet, producing a bundle of straw.

"Come, then," said D'Artagnan, "you are right. Mine host's face does not please me at all; it is too gracious."

"Nor me either," said Athos.

Planchet mounted by the window and installed himself across the doorway, while Grimaud went and shut himself up in the stable, undertaking that by five o'clock in the morning he and the four horses should be ready.

The night was quiet enough. Towards two o'clock in the morning somebody endeavored to open the door; but as Planchet awoke in an instant and cried, "Who goes there?" somebody replied that he was mistaken, and went away.

At four o'clock in the morning they heard a terrible riot in the stables. Grimaud had tried to waken the stable-boys, and the stable-boys had beaten him. When they opened the window, they saw the poor lad lying senseless, with his head split by a blow with a pitchfork.

Planchet went down into the yard, and wished to saddle the horses; but the horses were all used up. Mousqueton's horse, which had travelled for five or six hours without

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a rider the day before, might have been able to pursue the journey; but by an inconceivable error the veterinary surgeon, who had been sent for, as it appeared, to bleed one of the host's horses, had bled Mousqueton's.

This began to be annoying. All these successive accidents were perhaps the result of chance; but they might be the fruits of a plot. Athos and D'Artagnan went out, while Planchet was sent to inquire if there were not three horses for sale in the neighborhood. At the door stood two horses, fresh, strong, and fully equipped. These would just have suited them. He asked where their masters were, and was informed that they had passed the night in the inn, and were then settling their bill with the host.

Athos went down to pay the reckoning, while D'Artagnan and Planchet stood at the street-door. The host was in a lower and back room, to which Athos was requested to go.

Athos entered without the least mistrust, and took out two pistoles to pay the bill. The host was alone, seated before his desk, one of the drawers of which was partly open. He took the money which Athos offered to him, and after turning and turning it over and over in his hands, suddenly cried out that it was bad, and that he would have him and his companions arrested as forgers.

"You blackguard!" cried Athos, going towards him, "I 'll cut your ears off!"

At the same instant, four men, armed to the teeth, entered by side-doors, and rushed upon Athos.

"I am taken!" shouted Athos, with all the power of his lungs; "Go on, D'Artagnan! Spur, spur!" and he fired two pistols.

D'Artagnan and Planchet did not require twice bidding; they unfastened the two horses that were waiting at the

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door, leaped upon them, buried their spurs in their sides, and set off at full gallop.

"Do you know what has become of Athos?" asked D'Artagnan of Planchet, as they galloped on.

"Ah, Monsieur," said Planchet, "I saw one fall at each of his two shots, and he appeared to me, through the glass door, to be fighting with his sword with the others."

"Brave Athos!" murmured D'Artagnan, "and to think that we are compelled to leave him; maybe the same fate awaits us two paces hence. Forward, Planchet, forward! you are a brave fellow."

"As I told you, Monsieur," replied Planchet, "Picards are found out by being used? Besides, I am here in my own country, and that excites me."

And both, with free use of the spur, arrived at St. Omer without drawing bit. At St. Omer they breathed their horses with the bridles passed under their arms for fear of accident, and ate a morsel from their hands on the stones of the street, after which they departed again.

At a hundred paces from the gates of Calais, D'Artagnan's horse gave out, and could not by any means be made to get up again, the blood flowing from his eyes and his nose. There still remained Planchet's horse; but he stopped short, and could not be made to move a step.

Fortunately, as we have said, they were within a hundred paces of the city; they left their two nags upon the high-road, and ran towards the quay. Planchet called his master's attention to a gentleman who had just arrived with his lackey, and only preceded them by about fifty paces. They made all speed to come up to this gentleman, who appeared to be in great haste. His boots were covered with dust, and he inquired if he could not instantly cross over to England.

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"Nothing would be more easy," said the captain of a vessel ready to set sail, "but this morning came an order to let no one leave without express permission from the cardinal."

"I have that permission," said the gentleman, drawing a paper from his pocket; "here it is."

"Have it examined by the governor of the port," said the shipmaster, "and give me the preference."

"Where shall I find the governor?"

"At his country-house."

"And that is situated?"

"At a quarter of a league from the city. Look, you may see it from here, — at the foot of that little hill, that slated roof."

"Very well," said the gentleman. And, with his lackey, he took the road to the governor's country-house.

D'Artagnan and Planchet followed the gentleman at a distance of five hundred paces. Once outside the city, D'Artagnan overtook the gentleman as he was entering a little wood.

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "you appear to be in great haste?"

"No one can be more so, Monsieur."

"I am sorry for that," said D'Artagnan; "for as I am in great haste likewise, I wished to beg you to render me a service."

"What?"

"To let me sail first."

"That 's impossible," said the gentleman; "I have travelled sixty leagues in forty-four hours, and by to-morrow at mid-day I must be in London."

"I have performed the same distance in forty hours, and by to-morrow at ten o'clock in the morning I must be in London."

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"Very sorry, Monsieur; but I was here first, and will not sail second."

"I am sorry too, Monsieur; but I arrived second, and must sail first."

"The king's service!" said the gentleman.

"My own service!" said D'Artagnan.

"But this is a needless quarrel you seek with me, as it seems to me."

"*Parbleu!* what do you desire it to be?"

"What do you want?"

"Would you like to know?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I wish that order of which you are the bearer, seeing that I have not one of my own, and must have one."

"You jest, I presume."

"I never jest."

"Let me pass!"

"You shall not pass."

"My brave young man, I will blow out your brains. *Hola*, Lubin! my pistols!"

"Planchet," called out D'Artagnan, "take care of the lackey; I will manage the master."

Planchet, emboldened by the first exploit, sprang upon Lubin; and being strong and vigorous, he soon got him on the broad of his back, and placed his knee upon his breast.

"Go on with your affair, Monsieur," cried Planchet; "I have finished mine."

Seeing this, the gentleman drew his sword, and sprang upon D'Artagnan; but he had too strong an adversary. In three seconds D'Artagnan had wounded him three times, exclaiming at each thrust, "One for Athos; one for Porthos; and one for Aramis!"

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At the third hit the gentleman fell like a log. D'Artagnan believed him to be dead, or at least insensible, and went towards him for the purpose of taking the order; but the moment he extended his hand to search for it, the wounded man, who had not dropped his sword, plunged the point into his breast, crying, "One for you!"

"And one for me, — the best for the last!" cried D'Artagnan, furious, nailing him to the earth with a fourth thrust through his body.

This time the gentleman closed his eyes and fainted. D'Artagnan searched his pockets, and took from one of them the order for the passage. It was in the name of the Comte de Wardes.

Then, casting a glance on the handsome young man, who was scarcely twenty-five years of age, and whom he was leaving in his gore, deprived of sense and perhaps dead, he gave a sigh for that unaccountable destiny which leads men to destroy each other for the interests of people who are strangers to them, and who often do not even know that they exist. But he was soon roused from these reflections by Lubin, who uttered loud cries and screamed for help with all his might.

Planchet grasped him by the throat, and pressed as hard as he could. "Monsieur," said he, "as long as I hold him in this manner he can't cry, I'll be bound; but as soon as I let go he will howl again. I know him for a Norman, and Normans are obstinate."

In fact, tightly held as he was, Lubin endeavored still to cry out.

"Stay!" said D'Artagnan; and taking out his handkerchief, he gagged him.

"Now," said Planchet, "let us bind him to a tree."

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This being properly done, they drew the Comte de Wardes close to his servant; and as night was approaching, and as the wounded man and the bound man were at some little distance within the wood, it was evident they were likely to remain there till the next day.

"And now," said D'Artagnan, "to the governor's."

"But you are wounded, it seems," said Planchet.

"Oh, that 's nothing! Let us attend to what is more pressing first, and then we will attend to my wound; besides, it does not seem very dangerous."

And they both set forward as fast as they could towards the country-house of the worthy functionary.

The Comte de Wardes was announced, and D'Artagnan was introduced.

"You have an order signed by the cardinal?" said the governor.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan; "here it is."

"Ah, ah! it is quite regular and explicit," said the governor.

"Most likely," said D'Artagnan; "I am one of his most faithful servants."

"It appears that his Eminence is anxious to prevent some one from crossing to England?"

"Yes; a certain D'Artagnan, a Béarnese gentleman who left Paris in company with three of his friends, with the intention of going to London."

"Do you know him personally?" asked the governor.

"Whom?"

"This D'Artagnan."

"Perfectly well."

"Describe him to me, then."

"Nothing more easy."

And D'Artagnan gave, feature for feature, a description of the Comte de Wardes.

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"Is he accompanied?"

"Yes; by a lackey named Lubin."

"We will keep a sharp lookout for them; and if we lay hands on them his Eminence may be assured they will be re-conducted to Paris under a good escort."

"And by doing so, Monsieur the Governor," said D'Artagnan, "you will deserve well of the cardinal."

"Shall you see him on your return, Monsieur Count?"

"Without a doubt."

"Tell him, I beg you, that I am his humble servant."

"I will not fail."

Delighted with this assurance, the governor countersigned the passport and delivered it to D'Artagnan. D'Artagnan lost no time in useless compliments. He thanked the governor, bowed, and departed. Once outside, he and Planchet set off as fast as they could; and by making a long detour avoided the wood and re-entered the city by another gate.

The vessel was quite ready to sail, and the captain was waiting on the wharf. "Well?" said he, on perceiving D'Artagnan.

"Here is my pass countersigned," said the latter.

"And that other gentleman?"

"He will not go to-day," said D'Artagnan; "but be easy, I 'll pay you for us two."

"In that case let us go," said the shipmaster.

"Let us go," repeated D'Artagnan.

He leaped with Planchet into the boat, and five minutes after they were on board. It was time; for they had scarcely sailed half a league, when D'Artagnan saw a flash and heard a detonation. It was the cannon which announced the closing of the port.

He had now leisure to look to his wound. Fortunately, as D'Artagnan had thought, it was not dangerous. The

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point of the sword had touched a rib, and glanced along the bone. Still further, his shirt had stuck to the wound, and he had lost only a few drops of blood.

D'Artagnan was worn out with fatigue. A mattress was laid upon the deck for him. He threw himself upon it, and fell asleep.

On the morrow, at break of day, they were still three or four leagues from the coast of England. The breeze had been so light all night, they had made but little progress. At ten o'clock the vessel cast anchor in the harbor of Dover, and at half-past ten D'Artagnan placed his foot on English land, crying, "Here I am at last!"

But that was not all; they must get to London. In England the post was well served. D'Artagnan and Planchet took each a post-horse, and a postilion rode before them. In a few hours they were in the capital.

D'Artagnan did not know London; he did not know a word of English; but he wrote the name of Buckingham on a piece of paper, and every one pointed out to him the way to the duke's hôtel.

The duke was at Windsor hunting with the king. D'Artagnan inquired for the confidential valet of the duke, who, having accompanied him in all his voyages, spoke French perfectly well; he told him that he came from Paris on an affair of life and death, and that he must speak with his master instantly.

The confidence with which D'Artagnan spoke convinced Patrick, which was the name of this minister of the minister. He ordered two horses to be saddled, and himself went as guide to the young guardsman. As for Planchet, he had been lifted from his horse as stiff as a rush; the poor lad's strength was almost exhausted. D'Artagnan seemed iron.

On their arrival at the castle they learned that Buck-

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ingham and the king were hawking in the marshes two or three leagues away. In twenty minutes they were on the spot named. Patrick soon caught the sound of his master's voice calling his falcon.

"Whom must I announce to my Lord Duke?" asked Patrick.

"The young man who one evening sought a quarrel with him on the Pont Neuf, opposite the Samaritaine."

"A singular introduction!"

"You will find that it is as good as another."

Patrick galloped off, reached the duke, and announced to him in the terms directed that a messenger awaited him.

Buckingham at once remembered the circumstance, and suspecting that something was going on in France of which it was necessary he should be informed, he only took the time to inquire where the messenger was, and recognizing from afar the uniform of the Guards, he put his horse into a gallop, and rode straight up to D'Artagnan. Patrick discreetly kept in the background.

"No misfortune has happened to the queen?" cried Buckingham, the instant he came up, throwing all his fear and love into the question.

"I believe not; nevertheless, I believe she runs some great peril from which your Grace alone can extricate her."

"I!" cried Buckingham. "What is it? I should be too happy to be of any service to her. Speak, speak!"

"Take this letter," said D'Artagnan.

"This letter! from whom comes this letter?"

"From her Majesty, as I think."

"From her Majesty!" said Buckingham, becoming so pale that D'Artagnan feared he would faint as he broke the seal.

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"What is this rent?" said he, showing D'Artagnan a place where it had been pierced through.

"Ah," said D'Artagnan, "I did not see that; it was the sword of the Comte de Wardes which made that hole, when he gave me a good thrust in the breast."

"You are wounded?" asked Buckingham, as he opened the letter.

"Oh, nothing but a scratch," said D'Artagnan.

"Just Heaven, what have I read?" cried the duke. "Patrick, remain here, or rather join the king, wherever he may be, and tell his Majesty that I humbly beg him to excuse me, but an affair of the greatest importance recalls me to London. Come, Monsieur, come!" and both set off towards the capital at full gallop.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE COMTESSE DE WINTER.

As they rode along, the duke endeavored to draw from D'Artagnan, not all that had happened, but what D'Artagnan himself knew. By adding all that he heard from the mouth of the young man to his own remembrances, he was enabled to form a pretty exact idea of a position of the seriousness of which, for the rest, the queen's letter, short but explicit, gave him the clew. But that which astonished him most was that the cardinal, so deeply interested in preventing this young man from setting his foot in England, had not succeeded in arresting him on the road. It was then, upon the manifestation of this astonishment, that D'Artagnan related to him the precaution taken, and how, thanks to the devotion of his three friends, whom he had left scattered and bleeding on the road, he had succeeded in coming off with a single sword-thrust, which had pierced the queen s letter, and for which he had repaid M. de Wardes with such terrible coin. While he was listening to this recital, delivered with the greatest simplicity, the duke looked from time to time at the young man with astonishment, as if he could not comprehend how so much prudence, courage, and devotedness could be allied with a countenance which indicated not more than twenty years.

The horses went like the wind, and in a few minutes they were at the gates of London. D'Artagnan imagined that on arriving in town the duke would slacken his pace,

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but it was not so. He kept on his way at the same rate, heedless about upsetting those whom he met on the road. In fact, in crossing the city two or three accidents of this kind happened; but Buckingham did not even turn his head to see what became of those he had knocked down. D'Artagnan followed him amid cries which strongly resembled curses.

On entering the court of his hôtel, Buckingham sprang from his horse, and without thinking what became of the animal, threw the bridle on his neck, and sprang towards the vestibule. D'Artagnan did the same, with a little more concern, however, for the noble creatures, whose merits he fully appreciated; but he had the satisfaction of seeing three or four grooms run from the kitchens and the stables, and busy themselves with the steeds.

The duke walked so fast that D'Artagnan had some trouble in keeping up with him. He passed through several apartments, of an elegance of which even the greatest nobles of France had not even an idea, and arrived at length in a bedchamber which was at once a miracle of taste and of richness. In the alcove of this chamber was a door concealed in the tapestry which the duke opened with a little gold key which he wore suspended from his neck by a chain of the same metal. With discretion D'Artagnan remained behind; but at the moment when Buckingham crossed the threshold, he turned round, and seeing the hesitation of the young man, "Come in!" cried he, "and if you have the good fortune to be admitted to her Majesty's presence, tell her what you have seen."

Encouraged by this invitation, D'Artagnan followed the duke, who closed the door after them. The two found themselves in a small chapel covered with a tapestry of Persian silk worked with gold, and brilliantly

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lighted with a vast number of candles. Over a species of altar, and beneath a canopy of blue velvet, surmounted by white and red plumes, was a full-length portrait of Anne of Austria, so perfect in its resemblance, that D'Artagnan uttered a cry of surprise on beholding it. One might believe the queen was about to speak. On the altar, and beneath the portrait, was the casket containing the diamond studs.

The duke approached the altar, knelt as a priest might have done before a crucifix, and opened the casket. "There," said he, drawing from the casket a large bow of blue ribbon all sparkling with diamonds, — "there are the precious studs which I have taken an oath should be buried with me. The queen gave them to me, the queen requires them again. Her will be done, like that of God, in all things."

Then he began to kiss, one after the other, those dear studs with which he was about to part. All at once he uttered a terrible cry.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed D'Artagnan, anxiously, "what has happened to you, my Lord?"

"All is lost!" cried Buckingham, becoming as pale as a corpse; "two of the studs are wanting, there are only ten."

"Can you have lost them, my Lord, or do you think they have been stolen?"

"They have been stolen," replied the duke, "and it is the cardinal who has dealt this blow. Hold; see! the ribbons which held them have been cut with scissors."

"If my Lord suspects they have been stolen, perhaps the person who stole them still has them in his hands."

"Wait, wait!" said the duke. "The only time I have worn these studs was at a ball given by the king, eight days ago, at Windsor. The Comtesse de Winter, with

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whom I had quarrelled, became reconciled to me at that ball. That reconciliation was nothing but the vengeance of a jealous woman. I have never seen her from that day. The woman is an agent of the cardinal."

"He has agents then throughout the world?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Oh, yes," said Buckingham, grating his teeth with rage. "Yes, he is a terrible antagonist. But when is this ball to take place?"

"Monday next."

"Monday next! Still five days before us. That's more time than we want. Patrick!" cried the duke, opening the door of the chapel, "Patrick!" His confidential valet appeared.

"My jeweller and my secretary."

The valet went out with a mute promptitude which showed him accustomed to obey blindly and without reply.

But although the jeweller had been mentioned first, it was the secretary who first made his appearance. This was simply because he lived in the hôtel. He found Buckingham seated at a table in his bedchamber, writing orders with his own hand.

"Mr. Jackson," said he, "go instantly to the lord chancellor, and tell him that I charge him with the execution of these orders. I wish them to be promulgated immediately."

"But, my Lord, if the lord chancellor interrogates me upon the motives which may have led your Grace to adopt such an extraordinary measure, what shall I reply?"

"That such is my pleasure, and that I answer for my will to no man."

"Will that be the answer," replied the secretary, smil-

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ing, "which he must transmit to his Majesty if, by chance, his Majesty should have the curiosity to know why no vessel is to leave any of the ports of Great Britain?"

"You are right, Mr. Jackson," replied Buckingham. "He will say, in that case, to the king that I am determined on war, and that this measure is my first act of hostility against France."

The secretary bowed and retired.

"We are safe on that side," said Buckingham, turning towards D'Artagnan. "If the studs are not yet gone to Paris, they will not arrive till after you."

"How so?"

"I have just placed an embargo on all vessels at present in his Majesty's ports, and without particular permission, not one dare lift an anchor."

D'Artagnan looked with stupefaction at a man who thus employed the unlimited power with which he was clothed by the confidence of a king in the prosecution of his intrigues. Buckingham saw by the expression of the young man's face what was passing in his mind, and he smiled.

"Yes," said he, "yes, Anne of Austria is my true queen. Upon a word from her, I would betray my country, I would betray my king, I would betray my God. She asked me not to send the Protestants of Rochelle the assistance I promised them; I have not done so. I broke my word, it is true; but what signifies that? I obeyed my love; and have I not been richly paid for that obedience? It was to that obedience I owe her portrait."

D'Artagnan was amazed to note by what fragile and unknown threads the destinies of nations and the lives of men are suspended. He was lost in these reflections when the goldsmith entered. He was an Irishman,—

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one of the most skilful of his craft, and who himself confessed that he gained a hundred thousand livres a year by the Duke of Buckingham.

"Mr. O'Reilly," said the duke, leading him into the chapel, "look at these diamond studs, and tell me what they are worth apiece."

The goldsmith cast a glance at the elegant manner in which they were set, calculated, one with another, what the diamonds were worth, and without hesitation said, "Fifteen hundred pistoles each, my Lord."

"How many days would it require to make two studs exactly like them? You see there are two wanting."

"Eight days, my Lord."

"I will give you three thousand pistoles apiece, if I can have them by the day after to-morrow."

"My Lord, they shall be yours."

"You are a jewel of a man, Mr. O'Reilly; but that is not all. These studs cannot be trusted to anybody; it must be done in the palace."

"Impossible, my Lord! There is no one but myself can so execute them that one cannot tell the new from the old."

"Therefore, my dear Mr. O'Reilly, you are my prisoner. And if you wish ever to leave my palace, you cannot; so make the best of it. Name to me such of your workmen as you need, and point out the tools they must bring."

The goldsmith knew the duke. He knew all objection would be useless, and instantly determined how to act.

"May I be permitted to inform my wife?" said he.

"Oh, you may even see her if you like, my dear Mr. O'Reilly. Your captivity shall be mild, be assured; and as every inconvenience deserves its indemnification, here is, in addition to the price of the studs, an order for a

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thousand pistoles, to make you forget the annoyance I cause you."

D'Artagnan could not get over the surprise created in him by this minister, who thus open-handed, sported with men and millions.

As to the goldsmith, he wrote to his wife, sending her the order for the thousand pistoles, and charging her to send him, in exchange, his most skilful apprentice, an assortment of diamonds, of which he gave the names and the weight, and the necessary tools.

Buckingham conducted the goldsmith to the chamber destined for him, and which, at the end of half-an-hour, was transformed into a workshop. Then he placed a sentinel at each door, with an order to admit nobody upon any pretence but his *valet de chambre*, Patrick. We need not add that the goldsmith, O'Reilly, and his assistant, were prohibited from going out under any pretext. This point settled, the duke turned to D'Artagnan. "Now, my young friend," said he, "England is all our own. What do you wish for? What do you desire?"

"A bed, my Lord," replied D'Artagnan. "At present, I confess, that is the thing I stand most in need of."

Buckingham gave D'Artagnan a chamber adjoining his own. He wished to have the young man at hand, — not that he at all mistrusted him, but for the sake of having some one to whom he could constantly talk of the queen.

In one hour after, the ordinance was published in London that no vessel bound for France should leave port, not even the packet-boat with letters. In the eyes of everybody this was a declaration of war between the two kingdoms.

On the day after the morrow, by eleven o'clock, the two diamond studs were finished, and they were so completely

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imitated, so perfectly alike, that Buckingham could not tell the new ones from the old ones, and experts in such matters would have been deceived as he was. He immediately called D'Artagnan.

"Here," said he to him, "are the diamond studs that you came to bring; and be my witness that I have done all that human power could do."

"Be satisfied, my Lord, I will tell all that I have seen. But does your Grace mean to give me the studs without the casket?"

"The casket would encumber you. Besides, the casket is the more precious from being all that is left to me. You will say that I keep it."

"I will perform your commission, word for word, my Lord."

"And now," resumed Buckingham, looking earnestly at the young man, "how shall I ever acquit myself of the debt I owe you?"

D'Artagnan blushed up to the whites of his eyes. He saw that the duke was searching for a means of making him accept something, and the idea that the blood of his friends and himself was about to be paid for with English gold was strangely repugnant to him.

"Let us understand each other, my Lord," replied D'Artagnan, "and let us make things clear beforehand in order that there may be no mistake. I am in the service of the King and Queen of France, and form part of the company of M. d'Essart, who, as well as his brother-in-law, M. de Tréville, is particularly attached to their Majesties. What I have done, then, has been for the queen, and not at all for your Grace. And still further, it is very probable I should not have done anything of this, if it had not been to make myself agreeable to some one who is my lady, as the queen is yours."

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"Yes," said the duke, smiling, "and I even believe that I know that other person; it is —"

"My Lord, I have not named her!" interrupted the young man, warmly.

"That is true," said the duke; "and it is to this person I am bound to discharge my debt of gratitude."

"You have said, my Lord; for truly, at this moment when there is question of war, I confess to you that I see nothing in your Grace but an Englishman, and consequently an enemy whom I should have much greater pleasure in meeting on the field of battle than in the park at Windsor or the corridors of the Louvre, — all which, however, will not prevent me from executing to the very point my commission, or from laying down my life, if there be need of it, to accomplish it; but I repeat it to your Grace, without your having personally on that account more to thank me for in this second interview than for what I did for you in the first."

"We say, 'Proud as a Scotchman,'" murmured the Duke of Buckingham.

"And we say, 'Proud as a Gascon,'" replied D'Artagnan. "The Gascons are the Scots of France."

D'Artagnan saluted the duke, and was retiring.

"Well, are you going away in that manner? Where, and how?"

"That 's true!"

"'Fore Gad, these Frenchman have no foresight!"

"I had forgotten that England was an island, and that you were the king of it."

"Go to the riverside, ask for the brig Sund, and give this letter to the captain; he will convey you to a little port, where certainly you are not expected, and which is ordinarily only frequented by fishermen."

"The name of that port?"

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"St. Valery; but listen. When you have arrived there you will go to a mean tavern, without a name and without a sign, — a mere fisherman's hut. You cannot be mistaken; there is but one."

"Afterwards?"

"You will ask for the host, and will repeat to him the word 'Forward!'"

"Which means?"

"In French, *En avant.* It is the pass-word. He will give you a horse all saddled, and will point out to you the road you ought to take. You will find, in the same way, four relays on your route. If you will give at each of these relays your address in Paris, the four horses will follow you thither. You already know two of them, and you appeared to appreciate them like a judge. They were those we rode on; and you may rely upon me for the others not being inferior to them. These horses are equipped for the field. However proud you may be, you will not refuse to accept one of them, and to request your three companions to accept the others, — that is, in order to make war against us. Besides, the end justifies the means, as you Frenchmen say, does it not?"

"Yes, my Lord, I accept them," said D'Artagnan; "and if it please God, we will make a good use of your presents."

"Well, now, your hand, young man. Perhaps we shall soon meet on the field of battle; but in the mean time we shall part good friends, I hope."

"Yes, my Lord; but with the hope of soon becoming enemies."

"Be satisfied; I promise you that."

"I depend upon your word, my Lord."

D'Artagnan bowed to the duke, and made his way as quickly as possible to the riverside. Opposite the Tower

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of London he found the vessel that had been named to him, delivered his letter to the captain, who after having it examined by the governor of the port made immediate preparations to sail.

Fifty vessels were waiting to set out. Passing alongside of one of them, D'Artagnan fancied he perceived on board of it the woman of Meung, — the same whom the unknown gentleman had called Milady, and whom D'Artagnan had thought so handsome; but thanks to the current of the stream and a fair wind, his vessel passed so quickly that he had little more than a glimpse of her.

The next day, about nine o'clock in the morning, he landed at St. Valery. D'Artagnan went instantly in search of the inn, and easily discovered it by the riotous noise which resounded from it. War between England and France was talked of as near and certain, and the jolly sailors were having a carousal.

D'Artagnan made his way through the crowd, advanced towards the host, and pronounced the word "Forward!" The host instantly made him a sign to follow, went out with him by a door which opened into a yard, led him to the stable, where a saddled horse awaited him, and asked him if he stood in need of anything else.

"I want to know the route I am to follow," said D'Artagnan.

"Go from hence to Blangy, and from Blangy to Neufchâtel. At Neufchâtel, go to the tavern of the Golden Harrow, give the pass-word to the landlord, and you will find, as you have here, a horse ready saddled."

"Have I anything to pay?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Everything is paid," replied the host, "and liberally. Begone, and may God guide you!"

"Amen!" cried the young man, and set off at full gallop.

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Four hours later he was in Neufchâtel. He strictly followed the instructions he had received. At Neufchâtel, as at St. Valery, he found a horse quite ready and awaiting him. He was about to remove the pistols from the saddle he had quitted to the one he was about to fill, but he found the holsters furnished with similar pistols.

"Your address at Paris?"

"Hôtel of the Guards, company of D'Essart."

"Enough," replied the questioner.

"Which route must I take?" demanded D'Artagnan, in his turn.

"That of Rouen; but you will leave the city on your right. You must stop at the little village of Écouis, in which there is but one tavern, — the Shield of France. Don't condemn it from appearances; you will find a horse in the stables quite as good as this."

"The same pass-word?"

"Exactly."

"Adieu, Master!"

"A good journey, Gentleman! Do you want anything?"

D'Artagnan shook his head, and set off at full speed. At Écouis, the same scene was repeated. He found as provident a host and a fresh horse. He left his address as he had done before, and set off again at the same pace for Pontoise. At Pontoise he changed his horse for the last time, and at nine o'clock galloped into the yard of Tréville's hôtel. He had made nearly sixty leagues in little more than twelve hours.

M. de Tréville received him as if he had seen him that same morning; only, when pressing his hand a little more warmly than usual, he informed him that the company of D'Essart was on duty at the Louvre, and that he might repair at once to his post

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE BALLET OF LA MERLAISON.

On the morrow, nothing was talked of in Paris but the ball which the aldermen of the city were to give to the king and queen, and in which their Majesties were to dance the famous La Merlaison, — the favorite ballet of the king.

Eight days had been occupied in preparations at the Hôtel de Ville for this important evening. The city carpenters had erected scaffolds upon which the invited ladies were to be placed; the city grocer had ornamented the chambers with two hundred *flambeaux* of white wax, a piece of luxury unheard of at that period; and twenty violins were ordered, and the price for them fixed at double the usual rate, upon condition, said the report, that they should be played all night.

At ten o'clock in the morning the Sieur de la Coste, ensign in the king's Guards, followed by two officers and several archers of that body, came to the city registrar, named Clement, and demanded of him all the keys of the rooms and offices of the hôtel. These keys were given up to him instantly. Each of them had a ticket attached to it, by which it might be recognized; and from that moment the Sieur de la Coste was charged with the care of all the doors and all the avenues.

At eleven o'clock came in his turn Duhallier, captain of the Guards, bringing with him fifty archers, who were

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distributed immediately through the Hôtel de Ville, at the doors assigned them.

At three o'clock came two companies of the Guards, one French, the other Swiss. The company of French guards was composed half of M. Duhallier's men, and half of M. d'Essart's men.

At six in the evening the guests began to come. As fast as they entered, they were placed in the grand saloon, on the platforms prepared for them.

At nine o'clock Madame la Premiére Présidente arrived. As next to the queen, she was the most considerable personage of the fête, she was received by the city officials, and placed in a box opposite to that which the queen was to occupy.

At ten o'clock, the king's collation, consisting of preserves and other delicacies, was prepared in the little room on the side of the church of St. Jean, in front of the silver buffet of the city, which was guarded by four archers.

At midnight great cries and loud acclamations were heard. It was the king, who was passing through the streets which led from the Louvre to the Hôtel de Ville, and which were all illuminated with colored lanterns.

Immediately the aldermen, clothed in their cloth robes, and preceded by six sergeants, each holding a *flambeau* in his hand, went to attend upon the king, whom they met on the steps, where the provost of the merchants made him the speech of welcome, — a compliment to which his Majesty replied with an apology for coming so late, laying the blame upon the cardinal, who had detained him till eleven o'clock, talking of affairs of state.

His Majesty, in full dress, was accompanied by his royal Highness, M. le Comte de Soissans, by the Grand Prior, by the Duc de Longueville, by the Duc d'Elbeuf, by the Comte d'Harcourt, by the Comte de la Roche-

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Guyon, by M. de Liancourt, by M. de Baradas, by the Comte de Cramail, and by the Chevalier de Souveray. Everybody noticed that the king looked dull and preoccupied.

A private room had been prepared for the king and another for Monsieur. In each of these closets were placed masquerade dresses. The same had been done for the queen and Madame the President. The nobles and ladies of their Majesties' suites were to dress, two by two, in chambers prepared for the purpose. Before entering his closet the king desired to be informed the moment the cardinal arrived.

Half an hour after the entrance of the king, fresh acclamations were heard; these announced the arrival of the queen. The aldermen did as they had done before, and preceded by their sergeants, advanced to receive their illustrious guest. The queen entered the great hall; and it was remarked that, like the king, she looked dull and even weary.

At the moment she entered, the curtain of a small gallery which to that time had been closed, was drawn, and the pale face of the cardinal appeared, he being dressed as a Spanish cavalier. His eyes were fixed upon those of the queen, and a smile of terrible joy passed over his lips; the queen did not wear her diamond studs.

The queen remained for a short time to receive the compliments of the city dignitaries and to reply to the salutations of the ladies. All at once the king appeared with the cardinal at one of the doors of the hall. The cardinal was speaking to him in a low voice, and the king was very pale.

The king made his way through the crowd without a mask, and the ribbons of his doublet scarcely tied. He went straight to the queen, and in an altered voice said.

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"Why, Madame, have you not thought proper to wear your diamond studs, when you know it would give me so much gratification?"

The queen cast a glance around her, and saw the cardinal behind, with a diabolical smile on his countenance.

"Sire," replied the queen, with a faltering voice, "because, in the midst of such a crowd as this, I feared some accident might happen to them."

"And you were wrong, Madame. If I made you that present it was that you might adorn yourself therewith. I tell you that you were wrong."

The voice of the king was tremulous with anger. Everybody looked and listened with astonishment, comprehending nothing of what passed.

"Sire," said the queen, "I can send for them to the Louvre, where they are, and thus your Majesty's wishes will be complied with."

"Do so, Madame, do so, and that at once; for within an hour the ballet will commence."

The queen bent in token of submission, and followed the ladies who were to conduct her to her room. On his part the king returned to his apartment.

There was a moment of trouble and confusion in the assembly. Everybody had remarked that something had passed between the king and queen; but both of them had spoken so low, that everybody, out of respect, withdrew several steps, so that nobody had heard anything. The violins began to sound with all their might, but nobody listened to them.

The king came out first from his room. He was in a most elegant hunting costume; and Monsieur and the other nobles were dressed like him. This was the costume that best became the king. So dressed, he really appeared the first gentleman of his kingdom.

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The cardinal drew near to the king, and placed in his hand a small casket. The king opened it, and found in it two diamond studs.

"What does this mean?" demanded he of the cardinal.

"Nothing," replied the latter; "only, if the queen has the studs, which I very much doubt, count them, sire, and if you only find ten, ask her Majesty who can have stolen from her the two studs that are here."

The king looked at the cardinal as if to interrogate him; but he had not time to address any question to him, — a cry of admiration burst from every mouth. If the king appeared to be the first gentleman of his kingdom, the queen was without doubt the most beautiful woman in France.

It is true that the habit of a huntress became her admirably. She wore a beaver hat with blue feathers, a surtout of gray-pearl velvet, fastened with diamond clasps, and a petticoat of blue satin, embroidered with silver. On her left shoulder sparkled the diamond studs, on a bow of the same color as the plumes and the petticoat.

The king trembled with joy and the cardinal with vexation; although, distant as they were from the queen, they could not count the studs. The queen had them. The only question was, had she ten or twelve?

At that moment the violins sounded the signal for the ballet. The king advanced towards Madame the President, with whom he was to dance, and his Highness Monsieur with the queen. They took their places, and the ballet began.

The king danced facing the queen, and every time he passed by her, he devoured with his eyes those studs of which he could not ascertain the number. A cold sweat covered the brow of the cardinal.

The ballet lasted an hour, and had sixteen *entrées*.

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The ballet ended amid the applause of the whole assemblage, and every one re-conducted his lady to her place; but the king took advantage of the privilege he had of leaving his lady, to advance eagerly towards the queen.

"I thank you, Madame," said he, "for the deference you have shown to my wishes, but I think you want two of the studs, and I bring them back to you."

With these words he held out to the queen the two studs the cardinal had given him.

"How, sire?" cried the young queen, affecting surprise," you are giving me, then, two more: I shall have fourteen."

In fact the king counted them, and the twelve studs were all on her Majesty's shoulder.

The king called the cardinal.

"What does this mean, Monsieur Cardinal?" asked the king in a severe tone.

"This means, sire," replied the cardinal, "that I was desirous of presenting her Majesty with these two studs, and that not daring to offer them myself, I adopted this means of inducing her to accept them."

"And I am the more grateful to your Eminence," replied Anne of Austria, with a smile that proved she was not the dupe of this ingenious gallantry, "from being certain that these two studs alone have cost you as much as all the others cost his Majesty."

Then, saluting the king and the cardinal, the queen resumed her way to the chamber in which she had dressed, and where she was to take off her costume.

The attention which we have been obliged to give, during the commencement of the chapter, to the illustrious personages we have introduced into it, has diverted us for an instant from him to whom Anne of Austria owed the extraordinary triumph she had obtained over the cardinal:

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and who, confounded, unknown, lost in the crowd gathered at one of the doors, looked on at this scene, comprehensible only to four persons, — the king, the queen, his Eminence, and himself.

The queen had just regained her chamber, and D'Artagnan was about to retire, when he felt his shoulder lightly touched. He turned and saw a young woman, who made him a sign to follow her. The face of this young woman was covered with a black velvet mask; but notwithstanding this precaution, which was in fact taken rather against others than against him, he at once recognized his usual guide, the bright and intelligent Madame Bonacieux.

On the evening before, they had scarcely seen each other for a moment at the appartement of the Swiss guard, Germain, whither D'Artagnan had sent for her. The haste which the young woman was in to convey to the queen the excellent news of the happy return of her messenger prevented the two lovers from exchanging more than a few words. D'Artagnan therefore followed Madame Bonacieux moved by a double sentiment, — love and curiosity. All the way, and in proportion as the corridors became more deserted, D'Artagnan wished to stop the young woman, seize her and gaze upon her, were it only for a minute; but quick as a bird she glided between his hands, and when he wished to speak to her, her finger placed upon her mouth, with a little imperative gesture full of grace, reminded him that he was under the command of a power which he must blindly obey, and which forbade him even to make the slightest complaint. At length, after winding about for a minute or two, Madame Bonacieux opened the door of a closet, which was entirely dark, and led D'Artagnan into it. There she made a fresh sign of silence, and opened a second door concealed by tap-

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entry. The opening of this door disclosed a brilliant light, and she disappeared.

D'Artagnan remained for a moment motionless, asking himself where he could be; but soon a ray of light which penetrated through the chamber, together with the warm and perfumed air which reached him from the same aperture, the conversation of two or three ladies in language at once respectful and refined, and the word "Majesty" several times repeated, indicated clearly that he was in a closet attached to the queen's apartment. The young man waited in comparative darkness and listened.

The queen appeared cheerful and happy, which seemed to astonish the persons who surrounded her, and who were accustomed to see her almost always sad and full of care. The queen attributed this joyous feeling to the beauty of the fête, to the pleasure she had experienced in the ballet; and as it is not permissible to contradict a queen, whether she smile or weep, everybody expatiated on the gallantry of the aldermen of the city of Paris.

Although D'Artagnan did not at all know the queen, he soon distinguished her voice from the others at first by a slightly foreign accent, and next by that tone of domination naturally impressed upon all royal words. He heard her approach and withdraw from the partially open door; and twice or three times he even saw the shadow of a person intercept the light.

At length a hand and an arm, surpassingly adorable in their form and whiteness, glided through the tapestry. D'Artagnan at once comprehended that this was his recompense. He cast himself on his knees, seized the hand, and touched it respectfully with his lips. Then the hand was withdrawn, leaving in his an object which he perceived to be a ring. The door immediately closed, and D'Artagnan found himself again in complete obscurity.

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D'Artagnan placed the ring on his finger, and again waited; it was evident that all was not yet over. After the reward of his devotion, that of his love was to come. Besides, although the ballet was danced, the evening had scarcely begun. Supper was to be served at three, and the clock of St. Jean had struck three quarters past two.

The sound of voices diminished by degrees in the adjoining chamber. The company was then heard departing; then the door of the closet in which D'Artagnan was, was opened, and Madame Bonacieux entered.

"You at last?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Silence!" said the young woman, placing her hand upon his lips; "silence, and go the same way you came!"

"But where and when shall I see you again?" cried D'Artagnan.

"A note which you will find at home will tell you. Begone, begone!"

At these words she opened the door of the corridor, and pushed D'Artagnan out of the room. D'Artagnan obeyed like a child, without the least resistance or objection, which proved that he was really in love.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

D'ARTAGNAN ran home immediately, and although it was three o'clock in the morning and he had some of the worst quarters of Paris to traverse, he met with no misadventure. Every one knows that drunkards and lovers have a protecting deity.

He found the door of his passage open, sprang up the stairs and knocked softly in a manner agreed upon between him and his lackey. Planchet,[1] whom he had sent home two hours before from the Hôtel de Ville, telling him to sit up for him, opened the door to him.

"Has any one brought a letter for me?" asked D'Artagnan, eagerly.

"No one has *brought* a letter, Monsieur," replied Planchet; "but one has come of itself."

"What do you mean, blockhead?"

"I mean to say that when I came in, although I had the key of your appartement in my pocket, and that key had never quitted me, I found a letter on the green table-cover in your bedroom."

"And where is that letter?"

"I left it where I found it, Monsieur. It is not natural for letters to enter people's houses in this manner. If the window had been open or even ajar, I should think

[1] The reader may ask, "How came Planchet here?" when he was left "stiff as a rush" in London. In the intervening time Buckingham perhaps sent him to Paris, as he did the horses.

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nothing of it; but, no, — all was hermetically sealed. Beware, Monsieur; there is certainly some magic underneath."

Meanwhile, the young man had darted into his chamber, and opened the letter. It was from Madame Bonacieux, and was expressed in these terms: —

There are many thanks to be offered to you, and to be transmitted to you. Be this evening about ten o'clock at St. Cloud, in front of the pavilion which stands at the corner of the house of M. d'Estrées. — C. B.

While reading this letter, D'Artagnan felt his heart dilated and compressed by that delicious spasm which tortures and caresses the hearts of lovers.

It was the first billet he had received; it was the first rendezvous that had been granted him. His heart, swelled by the intoxication of joy, felt ready to dissolve away at the very gate of that terrestrial paradise called Love!

"Well, Monsieur," said Planchet, who had observed his master grow red and pale successively, "did I not guess truly? Is it not some bad affair?"

"You are mistaken, Planchet," replied D'Artagnan; "and as a proof, there is a crown to drink my health."

"I am much obliged to Monsieur for the crown he has given me, and I promise him to follow his instructions exactly; but it is not the less true that letters which come in this way into shut-up houses — "

"Fall from heaven, my friend, fall from heaven."

"Then Monsieur is satisfied?" asked Planchet.

"My dear Planchet, I am the happiest of men!"

"And I may profit by Monsieur's happiness, and go to bed?"

"Yes, go."

"May the blessings of heaven fall upon Monsieur! but it is not the less true that that letter — "

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And Planchet retired, shaking his head with an air of doubt, which the liberality of D'Artagnan had not entirely effaced.

Left alone, D'Artagnan read and re-read his billet. Then he kissed and re-kissed twenty times the lines traced by the hand of his beautiful mistress. At length he went to bed, fell asleep, and had golden dreams.

At seven o'clock in the morning he arose and called Planchet, who, at the second summons, opened the door, his countenance not yet quite freed from the anxiety of the preceding night.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "I am going out for all day, perhaps. You are, therefore, your own master till seven o'clock in the evening; but at seven o'clock you must hold yourself in readiness with two horses."

"There!" said Planchet. "We are going again, it appears, to have our hides pierced in all sorts of ways."

"You will take your musketoon and your pistols."

"There, now! did n't I say so?" cried Planchet. "I was sure of it — that cursed letter!"

"Don't be afraid, you idiot; there is nothing in hand but a party of pleasure."

"Ah, like the charming journey the other day, when it rained bullets, and produced a crop of steel-traps!"

"Well, if you are really afraid, M. Planchet," resumed D'Artagnan, "I will go without you. I prefer travelling alone to having a companion who entertains the least fear."

"Monsieur does me wrong," said Planchet. "I thought he had seen me at work."

"Yes, but I thought perhaps you had worn out all your courage the first time."

"Monsieur shall see that upon occasion I have some

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left; only I beg Monsieur not to be too prodigal of it if he wishes it to last long."

"Do you believe you have still a certain amount of it to expend this evening?"

"I hope so, Monsieur."

"Well, then, I count on you."

"At the appointed hour I shall be ready; only I believed that Monsieur had but one horse in the Guard stables."

"Perhaps there is but one at this moment; but by this evening there will be four."

"It appears that our journey was a remounting journey, then?"

"Exactly so," said D'Artagnan; and nodding to Planchet, he went out.

M. Bonacieux was at his door. D'Artagnan's intention was to go out without speaking to the worthy mercer; but the latter made so polite and friendly a salutation that his tenant felt obliged, not only to stop, but to enter into conversation with him.

Besides, how is it possible to avoid a little condescension towards a husband whose pretty wife has appointed a meeting with you that same evening at St. Cloud, opposite D'Estrées's pavilion? D'Artagnan approached him with the most amiable air he could assume.

The conversation naturally fell upon the incarceration of the poor man. M. Bonacieux, who was ignorant that D'Artagnan had overheard his conversation with the unknown of Meung, related to his young tenant the persecutions of that monster, M. de Laffemas, whom he never ceased to designate, during his account, by the title of the cardinal's executioner, and expatiated at great length upon the Bastille, the bolts, the wickets, the dungeons, the gratings, the instruments of torture.

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D'Artagnan listened to him with exemplary complaisance, and when he had finished said, "And Madame Bonacieux, do you know who carried her off? — for I do not forget that I owe to that unpleasant circumstance the good fortune of having made your acquaintance."

"Ah!" said Bonacieux, "they took good care not to tell me that; and my wife, on her part, has sworn to me by all that 's sacred that she does not know. But you," continued M. Bonacieux, in a tone of perfect good-fellowship, "what has become of you all these days? I have not seen you nor your friends, and I don't think you could gather all that dust that I saw Planchet brush off your boots yesterday from the pavement of Paris."

"You are right, my dear M. Bonacieux, my friends and I have been on a little journey."

"Far from here?"

"Oh, Lord, no! about forty leagues only. We went to take M. Athos to the waters of Forges, where my friends still remain."

"And you have returned, have you not?" replied M. Bonacieux, giving to his countenance a most sly air. "A handsome young fellow like you does not obtain long leaves of absence from his mistress; and we were impatiently waited for at Paris, were we not?"

"My faith!" said the young man, laughing, "I confess it, and so much the more readily, my dear Bonacieux, as I see there is no concealing anything from you. Yes, I was expected, and very impatiently, I acknowledge."

A slight shade passed over the brow of Bonacieux, but so slight that D'Artagnan did not perceive it.

"And we are going to be recompensed for our diligence?" continued the mercer, with a trifling alteration in his voice, — so trifling, indeed, that D'Artagnan did

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not perceive it any more than he had the momentary shade which, an instant before, had darkened the countenance of the worthy man.

"Ah, may you be a true prophet!" said D'Artagnan, laughing.

"No; what I say," replied Bonacieux, "is only that I may know whether I am delaying you."

"Why that question, my dear host?" asked D'Artagnan. "Do you intend to sit up for me?"

"No; but since my arrest and the robbery that was committed in my house, I am alarmed every time I hear a door open, particularly in the night. What the deuce can you expect? I am no swordsman."

"Well, don't be alarmed if I return at one, two, or three o'clock in the morning; indeed, do not be alarmed if I do not come at all."

This time Bonacieux became so pale that D'Artagnan could not help perceiving it, and asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing," replied Bonacieux, "nothing. Since my misfortunes I have been subject to faintnesses, which seize me all at once, and I have just felt a cold shiver. Pay no attention to it; you have nothing to occupy yourself with but being happy."

"Then I have full occupation, for I am so."

"Not yet; wait a little! This evening, you said."

"Well, this evening will come, thank God! And perhaps you look for it with as much impatience as I do; perhaps this evening Madame Bonacieux will visit the conjugal domicil."

"Madame Bonacieux is not at liberty this evening," replied the husband, seriously; "she is detained at the Louvre this evening by her duties."

"So much the worse for you, my dear host, so much

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the worse! When I am happy, I wish all the world to be so; but it appears that is not possible."

The young man departed, laughing at the joke, which he thought he alone could comprehend.

"Amuse yourself well!" replied Bonacieux, in a sepulchral tone.

But D'Artagnan was too far off to hear him; and if he had heard him in the disposition of mind he then enjoyed, he certainly would not have remarked it.

He took his way towards the hôtel of M. de Tréville; his visit of the day before, it is to be remembered, had been very short and very little explicative.

He found Tréville in a joyful mood. He had thought the king and queen charming at the ball. It is true the cardinal had been particularly ill-tempered. He had retired at one o'clock under the pretence of being indisposed. As to their Majesties, they did not return to the Louvre till six o'clock in the morning.

"Now," said Tréville, lowering his voice, and looking into every corner of the apartment to see if they were alone, — "now let us talk about yourself, my young friend; for it is evident that your happy return has something to do with the joy of the king, the triumph of the queen, and the humiliation of his Eminence. You must look out for yourself."

"What have I to fear," replied D'Artagnan, "as long as I shall have the luck to enjoy the favor of their Majesties?"

"Everything, believe me. The cardinal is not the man to forget a mystification until he has settled accounts with the mystifier; and the mystifier appears to me to have the air of being a certain young Gascon of my acquaintance."

"Do you believe that the cardinal is as well posted as yourself, and knows that I have been to London?"

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"The devil! You have been to London! Was it from London you brought that beautiful diamond that glitters on your finger? Beware, my dear D'Artagnan! a present from an enemy is not a good thing. Are there not some Latin verses upon that subject? Let me think!"

"Yes, doubtless," replied D'Artagnan, who had never been able to cram the first rudiments of that language into his head, and who had by his ignorance driven his master to despair, — "yes, doubtless there is one."

"There certainly is one," said M. de Tréville, who had a tincture of literature, "and M. de Benserade was quoting it to me the other day. Stop a minute, — ah, this is it:

'Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,'

which means, 'Beware of the enemy who makes you presents.'"

"This diamond does not come from an enemy, Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan, "it comes from the queen."

"From the queen! Oh, oh!" said M. de Tréville. "Why, it is indeed a true royal jewel, which is worth a thousand pistoles if it is worth a denier. By whom did the queen send you this jewel?"

"She gave it to me herself."

"Where?"

"In the room adjoining the chamber in which she changed her toilet."

"How?"

"Giving me her hand to kiss."

"You have kissed the queen's hand?" said M. de Tréville, looking earnestly at D'Artagnan.

"Her Majesty did me the honor to grant me that favor."

"And that in the presence of witnesses! Imprudent, thrice imprudent!"

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"No, Monsieur, be satisfied; nobody saw her," replied D'Artagnan, and he related to M. de Tréville how the affair came to pass.

"Oh, the women, the women!" cried the old soldier. "I know them by their romantic imagination. Everything that savors of mystery charms them. So you have seen the arm, that was all. You would meet the queen, and you would not know her; she might meet you, and she would not know who you are?"

"No; but thanks to this diamond," replied the young man.

"Listen," said M. de Tréville; "shall I give you counsel, good counsel, the counsel of a friend?"

"You will do me honor, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan.

"Well, then, go to the nearest goldsmith's, and sell that diamond for the highest price you can get from him. However much of a Jew he may be, he will give you at least eight hundred pistoles. Pistoles have no name, young man, and that ring has a terrible one, which may betray him who wears it."

"Sell this ring, a ring which comes from my sovereign? Never!" said D'Artagnan.

"Then, at least turn the gem inside, you silly fellow; for everybody must be aware that a cadet from Gascony does not find such stones in his mother's jewel-case."

"You think, then, I have something to dread?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I mean to say, young man, that he who sleeps over a mine the match of which is already lighted, may consider himself in safety in comparison with you."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, whom the positive tone of M. de Tréville began to disquiet, — "the devil! what must I do?"

"Above all things, be always on your guard. The car-

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dinal has a tenacious memory and a long arm; you may depend upon it, he will repay you by some ill turn."

"But of what sort?"

"Eh! how can I tell? Has he not all the tricks of a demon at his command? The least that can be expected is that you will be arrested."

"What! Will they dare to arrest a man in his Majesty's service?"

"*Pardieu!* they did not scruple much in the case of Athos. At all events, young man, rely upon one who has been thirty years at court. Do not lull yourself in security, or you will be lost; but, on the contrary, — and it is I who say it, — see enemies in all directions. If any one seeks a quarrel with you, shun it, were it with a child of ten years old. If you are attacked by day or by night, fight, but retreat, without shame; if you cross a bridge, feel every plank of it with your foot, lest one should give way beneath you; if you pass before a house which is being built, look up, for fear a stone should fall upon your head; if you stay out late, be always followed by your lackey, and let your lackey be armed, — if, by the bye, you can be sure of your lackey. Mistrust everybody, your friend, your brother, your mistress, — your mistress above all."

D'Artagnan blushed.

"Of my mistress," repeated he, mechanically; "and why her rather than another?"

"Because a mistress is one of the cardinal's favorite means; he has not one that is more expeditious. A woman will sell you for ten pistoles, witness Delilah. You are acquainted with the Scriptures?"

D'Artagnan thought of the appointment Madame Bonacieux had made with him for that very evening; but we are bound to say, to the credit of our hero, that the bad

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opinion entertained by M. de Tréville of women in general, did not inspire him with the least suspicion of his pretty hostess.

"But, *à propos*," resumed M. de Tréville, "what has become of your three companions?"

"I was about to ask you if you had heard no news of them."

"None, Monsieur."

"Well, I left them on my road, — Porthos at Chantilly, with a duel on his hands; Aramis at Crèvecœur, with a ball in his shoulder; and Athos at Amiens, detained by an accusation of coining."

"See there, now!" said M. de Tréville; "and how the devil did you escape?"

"By a miracle, Monsieur, I must acknowledge, with a sword-thrust in my breast, and by nailing the Comte de Wardes on the by-road to Calais, like a butterfly on a curtain."

"There again! De Wardes, one of the cardinal's men, a cousin of Rochefort! Stop, my friend, I have an idea."

"Speak, Monsieur."

"In your place, I would do one thing."

"What?"

"While his Eminence was seeking for me in Paris, I would take, without sound of drum or trumpet, the road to Picardy, and would go and make some inquiries concerning my three companions. What the devil! they merit richly that piece of attention on your part."

"The advice is good, Monsieur, and to-morrow I will set out."

"To-morrow! and why not this evening?"

"This evening, Monsieur, I am detained in Paris by indispensable business."

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"Ah, young man, young man, some flirtation or other. Take care, I repeat to you, take care. It is woman who has ruined us, still ruins us, and will ruin us, as long as the world stands. Take my advice and set out this evening."

"Impossible, Monsieur."

"You have given your word, then?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Ah, that's quite another thing; but promise me, if you should not be killed to-night, that you will go to-morrow."

"I promise it."

"Do you need money?"

"I have still fifty pistoles. That, I think, is as much as I shall want."

"But your companions?"

"I don't think they can be in need of any. We left Paris, each with seventy-five pistoles in his pocket."

"Shall I see you again before your departure?"

"I think not, Monsieur, unless something new should happen."

"Well, a pleasant journey."

"Thanks, Monsieur."

D'Artagnan left M. de Tréville, touched more than ever by his paternal solicitude for his musketeers.

He called successively at the abodes of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. Neither of them had returned. Their lackeys likewise were absent, and nothing had been heard of either the one or the other. He would have inquired after them of their mistresses, but he was neither acquainted with Porthos's nor Aramis's, and as to Athos, he had none.

As he passed the Hôtel des Gardes, he took a glance into the stables. Three of the four horses had already arrived. Planchet, all astonishment, was busy grooming them, and had already finished two.

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"Ah, Monsieur," said Planchet, on perceiving D'Artagnan, "how glad I am to see you."

"Why so, Planchet?" asked the young man.

"Do you place confidence in our landlord, — M. Bonacieux?"

"I? Not the least in the world."

"Oh, you do quite right, Monsieur."

"But why this question?"

"Because, while you were talking with him, I watched you without listening to you; and, Monsieur, his countenance changed color two or three times!"

"Bah!"

"Preoccupied as Monsieur was with the letter he had received, he did not observe that; but I, whom the strange fashion in which that letter came into the house had placed on my guard, — I did not lose a movement of his features."

"And you found it?"

"Traitorous, Monsieur."

"Indeed!"

"Still more; as soon as Monsieur had left, and disappeared round the corner of the street, M. Bonacieux took his hat, shut his door, and set off at a quick pace in an opposite direction."

"It seems you are right, Planchet; all this appears to be a little mysterious; and be assured that we will not pay him our rent until the matter shall be categorically explained to us."

"Monsieur jests, but Monsieur will see."

"What would you have, Planchet? What must come is written."

"Monsieur does not then renounce his excursion for this evening?"

"Quite the contrary, Planchet; the more ill-will I have

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towards M. Bonacieux, the more punctual I shall be in keeping the appointment made by that letter which makes you so uneasy."

"Then that is Monsieur's determination?"

"Undeniably, my friend. At nine o'clock, then, be ready here at the hôtel, I will come and take you."

Planchet seeing there was no longer any hope of making his master renounce his project, heaved a profound sigh, and set to work to groom the third horse.

As to D'Artagnan, being at bottom a prudent youth, instead of returning home he went and dined with the Gascon priest, who, at the time of the distress of the four friends, had given them a breakfast of chocolate.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PAVILION.

At nine o'clock D'Artagnan was at the Hôtel des Gardes; he found Planchet all ready. The fourth horse had arrived.

Planchet was armed with his musketoon and a pistol. D'Artagnan had his sword, and placed two pistols in his belt; then both mounted, and departed quietly. It was quite dark, and no one saw them go out. Planchet took his place behind his master, and kept at a distance of ten paces from him.

D'Artagnan crossed the quays, went out by the gate of La Conference and followed the road, much more beautiful then than it is now, which leads to St. Cloud.

As long as he was in the city, Planchet kept at the respectful distance he had imposed upon himself; but as soon as the road began to be more lonely and dark, he drew softly nearer, so that when they entered the Bois de Boulogne he found himself riding quite naturally side by side with his master. In fact, we must not dissemble that the oscillation of the tall trees and the reflection of the moon in the dark underwood gave him serious uneasiness. D'Artagnan could not help perceiving that something more than usual was passing in the mind of his lackey and said, "Well, M. Planchet, what is the matter with us now?"

"Don't you think, Monsieur, that woods are like churches?"

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"How so, Planchet?"

"Because we dare not speak aloud in one or the other."

"But why do you not dare to speak aloud, Planchet, — because you are afraid?"

"Afraid of being heard? Yes, Monsieur."

"Afraid of being heard! Why, there is nothing improper in our conversation, my dear Planchet, and no one could find fault with it."

"Ah, Monsieur!" replied Planchet, recurring to his besetting idea, "that M. Bonacieux has something vicious in his eyebrows, and something very unpleasant in the play of his lips."

"What the devil makes you think of Bonacieux?"

"Monsieur, we think of what we can, and not of what we will."

"Because you are a coward, Planchet."

"Monsieur, we must not confound prudence with cowardice; prudence is a virtue."

"And you are very virtuous, are you not, Planchet?"

"Monsieur, is not that the barrel of a musket which glitters yonder? Had we not better lower our heads?"

"In truth," murmured D'Artagnan, to whom M. de Tréville's recommendation recurred, — "in truth, this animal will end by making me afraid." And he put his horse into a trot.

Planchet followed the movements of his master as if he had been his shadow, and was soon trotting by his side.

"Are we going to continue this pace all night?" asked Planchet.

"No; you are at your journey's end."

"How, Monsieur! and you?"

"I am going a few steps farther."

"And Monsieur leaves me here alone?"

"You are afraid, Planchet?"

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"No; I only beg leave to observe to Monsieur that the night will be very cold, that chills bring on rheumatism, and that a lackey who has the rheumatism makes but a poor servant, particularly to a master as active as Monsieur."

"Well, if you are cold, Planchet, you can go into one of those cabarets that you see yonder, and be in waiting for me at the door by six o'clock in the morning."

"Monsieur, I have eaten and drunk respectfully the crown you gave me this morning, so that I have not a sou left in case I should be cold."

"Here 's half a pistole. To-morrow morning."

D'Artagnan sprang from his horse, threw the bridle to Planchet, and departed at a quick pace, folding his cloak around him.

"Good Lord, how cold I am!" cried Planchet, as soon as he had lost sight of his master; and in such haste was he to warm himself that he went straight to a house set out with all the attributes of a suburban tavern, and knocked at the door.

In the mean time D'Artagnan, who had plunged into a by-path, continued his route and reached St. Cloud; but instead of following the main street he turned behind the château, reached a sort of retired lane, and found himself soon in front of the pavilion named. It was situated in a very private spot. A high wall, at the angle of which was the pavilion, ran along one side of this lane, and on the other was a little garden connected with a poor cottage which was protected by a hedge from passers-by.

He gained the place appointed, and as no signal had been given him by which to announce his presence, he waited.

Not the least noise was to be heard; it might be imagined that he was a hundred miles from the capital.

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D'Artagnan leaned against the hedge, after having cast a glance behind it. Beyond that hedge, that garden, and that cottage, a dark mist enveloped with its folds that immensity where Paris slept, — a vast void from which glittered a few luminous points, the funeral stars of that hell!

But for D'Artagnan all aspects were clothed happily, all ideas wore a smile, all shades were diaphanous. The appointed hour was about to strike. In fact, at the end of a few minutes the belfry of St. Cloud let fall slowly ten strokes from its sonorous jaws. There was something melancholy in this brazen voice pouring out its lamentations in the middle of the night; but each of those strokes, which made up the expected hour, vibrated harmoniously to the heart of the young man.

His eyes were fixed upon the little pavilion situated at the angle of the wall, of which all the windows were closed with shutters, except one on the first story. Through this window shone a mild light which silvered the foliage of two or three linden trees which formed a group outside the park. There could be no doubt that behind this little window, which threw forth such friendly beams, the pretty Madame Bonacieux expected him.

Wrapped in this sweet idea, D'Artagnan waited half-an-hour without the least impatience, his eyes fixed upon that charming little abode of which he could perceive a part of the ceiling with its gilded mouldings, attesting the elegance of the rest of the apartment.

The belfry of St. Cloud sounded half-past ten.

This time, without knowing why, D'Artagnan felt a cold shiver run through his veins. Perhaps the cold began to affect him, and he caught a perfectly physical sensation for a moral impression.

Then the idea seized him that he had read incorrectly,

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and that the appointment was for eleven o'clock. He drew near to the window, and placing himself so that a ray of light should fall upon the letter as he held it, he drew it from his pocket, and read it again; but he had not been mistaken, the appointment was for ten o'clock. He went and resumed his post, beginning to be rather uneasy at this silence and this solitude.

Eleven o'clock sounded.

D'Artagnan began now really to fear that something had happened to Madame Bonacieux. He clapped his hands three times, — the ordinary signal of lovers; but nobody replied to him, not even an echo.

He then thought, with a touch of vexation, that perhaps the young woman had fallen asleep while waiting for him. He approached the wall, and tried to climb it; but the wall had been recently pointed, and D'Artagnan could get no hold.

At that moment he thought of the trees, upon whose leaves the light still shone; and as one of them drooped over the road, he thought that from its branches he might get a glimpse of the interior of the pavilion.

The tree was easy to climb. Besides, D'Artagnan was but twenty years old, and consequently had not yet forgotten his schoolboy habits. In an instant he was among the branches, and his keen eyes plunged through the transparent panes into the interior of the pavilion.

It was a strange thing, and one which made D'Artagnan tremble from the sole of his foot to the roots of his hair, to find that this soft light, this calm lamp, enlightened a scene of fearful disorder. One of the windows was broken, the door of the chamber had been beaten in, and hung, split in two, on its hinges. A table, which had been covered with an elegant supper, was overturned. The decanters, broken in pieces, and the fruits crushed, strewed

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the floor. Everything in the apartment gave evidence of a violent and desperate struggle. D'Artagnan even fancied he could recognize amid this strange disorder, fragments of garments, and some bloody spots staining the cloth and the curtains. He hastened to descend into the street, with a frightful beating at his heart; he wished to see if he could find other traces of violence.

The little soft light shone on in the calmness of the night. D'Artagnan then perceived a thing that he had not before remarked, — for nothing had led him to the examination, — that the ground, trampled here and hoof-marked there, presented confused traces of men and horses. Besides, the wheels of a carriage, which appeared to have come from Paris, had made a deep impression in the soft earth, which did not extend beyond the pavilion, but turned again towards Paris.

At length D'Artagnan, in pursuing his researches, found near the wall a woman's torn glove. This glove, wherever it had not touched the muddy ground, was of irreproachable odor. It was one of those perfumed gloves that lovers like to snatch from a pretty hand.

As D'Artagnan pursued his investigations, a more abundant and more icy sweat rolled in large drops from his forehead; his heart was oppressed by a horrible anguish; his respiration was broken and short. And yet he said, to re-assure himself, that this pavilion perhaps had nothing in common with Madame Bonacieux; that the young woman had made an appointment with him before the pavilion, and not in the pavilion; that she might have been detained in Paris by her duties, or perhaps by the jealousy of her husband.

But all these reasons were combated, destroyed, overthrown, by that feeling of intimate pain which, on certain occasions, takes possession of our being, and cries to us

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so as to be understood unmistakably that some great misfortune is hanging over us.

Then D'Artagnan became almost wild. He ran along the high-road, took the path he had before taken, and reaching the ferry, interrogated the boatman.

About seven o'clock in the evening, the boatman had taken over a young woman, wrapt in a black mantle, who appeared to be very anxious not to be recognized; but entirely on account of her precautions, the boatman had paid more attention to her, and discovered that she was young and pretty.

There were then, as now, a crowd of young and pretty women who came to St. Cloud, and who had reasons for not being seen, and yet D'Artagnan did not for an instant doubt that it was Madame Bonacieux whom the boatman had noticed.

D'Artagnan took advantage of the lamp which burned in the cabin of the ferryman to read the billet of Madame Bonacieux once again, and satisfy himself that he had not been mistaken, that the appointment was at St. Cloud and not elsewhere, before the D'Estrées's pavilion and not in another street. Everything conspired to prove to D'Artagnan that his presentiments had not deceived him, and that a great misfortune had happened.

He again ran back to the château. It appeared to him that something might have happened at the pavilion in his absence, and that fresh information awaited him. The lane was still deserted, and the same calm soft light shone through the window.

D'Artagnan then thought of that cottage, silent and obscure, which had no doubt seen all, and could tell its tale. The gate of the enclosure was shut; but he leaped over the hedge, and in spite of the barking of a chained-up dog, went up to the cabin.

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No one answered to his first knocking. A silence of death reigned in the cabin as in the pavilion; but as the cabin was his last resource, he knocked again.

It soon appeared to him that he heard a slight noise within, — a timid noise which seemed to tremble lest it should be heard.

Then D'Artagnan ceased knocking, and prayed with an accent so full of anxiety and promises, terror and cajolery, that his voice was of a nature to re-assure the most fearful. At length an old, worm-eaten shutter was opened, or rather pushed ajar, but closed again as soon as the light from a miserable lamp which burned in the corner had shone upon the baldric, sword-belt, and pistol pommels of D'Artagnan. Nevertheless, rapid as the movement had been, D'Artagnan had had time to get a glimpse of the head of an old man.

"In the name of Heaven!" cried he, "listen to me; I have been waiting for some one who has not come. I am dying with anxiety. Has anything particular happened in the neighborhood? Speak!"

The window was again opened slowly, and the same face appeared, only it was now still more pale than before.

D'Artagnan related his history simply, with the omission of names. He told how he had a rendezvous with a young woman before that pavilion, and how, not seeing her come, he had climbed the linden tree, and by the light of the lamp had seen the disorder of the chamber.

The old man listened attentively, making a sign only that it was all so; and then, when D'Artagnan had ended, he shook his head with an air that announced nothing good.

"What do you mean?" cried D'Artagnan. "In the name of Heaven, explain yourself!"

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"Oh! Monsieur," said the old man, "ask me nothing; for if I dared tell you what I have seen, certainly no good would befall me."

"You have then seen something?" replied D'Artagnan. "In that case, in the name of Heaven," continued he, throwing him a pistole, "tell me what you have seen, and I will pledge you the word of a gentleman that not one of your words shall escape from my heart."

The old man read so much truth and so much grief in the face of the young man that he made him a sign to listen, and repeated in a low voice: "It was scarcely nine o'clock when I heard a noise in the street, and was wondering what it could be, when on coming to my door, I found that somebody was endeavoring to open it. As I am very poor, and am not afraid of being robbed, I went and opened the gate and saw three men at a few paces from it. In the shadow was a carriage with two horses, and some saddle-horses. These horses evidently belonged to the three men, who were dressed as cavaliers. 'Ah, my worthy gentlemen,' cried I, 'what do you want?' 'You must have a ladder?' said he who appeared to be the leader of the party. 'Yes, Monsieur, the one with which I gather my fruit.' 'Lend it to us, and go into your house again; there is a crown for the annoyance we have caused you. Only remember this, — if you speak a word of what you may see or what you may hear (for you will look and you will listen, I am quite sure, however we may threaten you), you are lost.' At these words he threw me a crown, which I picked up, and he took the ladder. After shutting the gate behind them, I pretended to return to the house, but I immediately went out at a back-door, and stealing along in the shade of the hedge, I gained yonder clump of elder, from which I could hear and see everything. The three men brought the

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carriage up quietly, and took out of it a little man, stout, short, elderly, and commonly dressed in clothes of a dark color, who ascended the ladder very carefully, looked suspiciously in at the window of the pavilion, came down as quietly as he had gone up, and whispered, 'It is she!' Immediately, he who had spoken to me approached the door of the pavilion, opened it with a key he had in his hand, closed the door and disappeared, while at the same time the other two men ascended the ladder. The little old man remained at the coach-door; the coachman took care of his horses, the lackey held the saddle-horses. All at once great cries resounded in the pavilion, and a woman came to the window, and opened it, as if to throw herself out of it; but as soon as she perceived the other two men, she fell back and they went into the chamber. Then I saw no more; but I heard the noise of breaking furniture. The woman screamed, and cried for help; but her cries were soon stifled. Two of the men appeared, bearing the woman in their arms, and carried her to the carriage, into which the little old man got after her. The leader closed the window, came out an instant after by the door, and satisfied himself that the woman was in the carriage. His two companions were already on horseback. He sprang into his saddle; the lackey took his place by the coachman; the carriage went off at a quick pace, escorted by the three horsemen, and all was over. From that moment I have neither seen nor heard anything."

D'Artagnan, entirely overcome by this terrible story, remained motionless and mute, while all the demons of anger and jealousy were howling in his heart.

"But, my good gentleman," resumed the old man, upon whom this mute despair certainly produced a greater effect than cries and tears would have done, "do not take on so; they did not kill her, and that 's a comfort."

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"Can you guess," said D'Artagnan, "who was the man who headed this infernal expedition?"

"I don't know him."

"But as you spoke to him, you must have seen him."

"Oh, it's a description you want?"

"Yes."

"A tall, dark man, with black mustaches, dark eyes, and the air of a gentleman."

"That's the man!" cried D'Artagnan, "again he, forever he! He is my demon, apparently. And the other?"

"Which?"

"The short one."

"Oh, he was not a gentleman, I'll answer for it; besides, he did not wear a sword, and the others treated him with small consideration."

"Some lackey," murmured D'Artagnan. "Poor woman, poor woman, what have they done with you?"

"You have promised to be secret, my good Monsieur?" said the old man.

"And I renew my promise. Be easy, I am a gentleman. A gentleman has but his word, and I have given you mine."

With a heavy heart, D'Artagnan again bent his way towards the ferry. Sometimes he hoped it could not be Madame Bonacieux, and that he should find her next day at the Louvre; sometimes he feared she had had an intrigue with another, who, in a jealous fit, had surprised her and carried her off. His mind was torn by doubt, grief, and despair.

"Oh, if I had my three friends here," cried he, "I should have, at least, some hopes of finding her; but who knows what is become of them?"

It was past midnight; the next thing was to find Planchet. D'Artagnan went successively into all the cabarets

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in which there was a light, but could not find Planchet in any of them.

At the sixth he began to reflect that the search was rather dubious. D'Artagnan had appointed six o'clock in the morning for his lackey, and wherever he might be, he was right.

Besides, it came into the young man's mind, that by remaining in the environs of the spot on which this sad event had passed, he would, perhaps, have some light thrown upon the mysterious affair. At the sixth cabaret, then, as we said, D'Artagnan stopped, asked for a bottle of wine of the best quality, and placing himself in the darkest corner of the room, determined thus to wait till daylight; but this time again his hopes were disappointed, and although he listened with all his ears, he heard nothing, amid the oaths, coarse jokes, and abuse which passed between the laborers, servants, and carters, who comprised the honorable society of which he formed a part, which could put him upon the least track of her who had been stolen from him. He was compelled, then, after having swallowed the contents of his bottle, to pass the time as well as to evade suspicion, to fall into the easiest position in his corner, and to sleep, whether well or ill. D'Artagnan, be it remembered, was only twenty years old, and at that age sleep has its imprescriptible rights which it imperiously insists upon, even with the saddest hearts.

Towards six o'clock D'Artagnan awoke with that uncomfortable feeling which generally accompanies the break of day after a bad night. He was not long in making his toilet. He examined himself to see if advantage had been taken of his sleep, and having found his diamond ring on his finger, his purse in his pocket, and his pistols in his belt, he rose, paid for his bottle, and went out to

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try if he could have any better luck in his search after his lackey than he had had the night before. The first thing he perceived through the damp gray mist was honest Planchet, who, with the two horses in hand, awaited him at the door of a little blind cabaret, before which D'Artagnan had passed without even a suspicion of its existence.

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE MISTRESS OF PORTHOS.

INSTEAD of returning directly home, D'Artagnan alighted at the door of M. de Tréville, and ran quickly up the stairs. This time he had decided to relate all that had passed. M. de Tréville would doubtless give him good advice as to the whole affair. Besides, as M. de Tréville saw the queen almost daily, he might be able to draw from her Majesty some intelligence of the poor young woman, whom they were doubtless making pay very dearly for her devotedness to her mistress.

M. de Tréville listened to the young man's account with a seriousness which proved that he saw something else in this adventure besides a love affair. When D'Artagnan had finished, he said, "Hum! all this savors of his Eminence, a league off."

"But what is to be done?" said D'Artagnan.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, at present, but quitting Paris, as I told you, as soon as possible. I will see the queen; I will relate to her the details of the disappearance of this poor woman, of which she is no doubt ignorant. These details will guide her on her part, and on your return, I shall perhaps have some good news to tell you. Rely on me."

D'Artagnan knew that, although a Gascon, M. de Tréville was not in the habit of making promises, and that when by chance he did promise, he more than kept his word. He bowed to him, then, full of gratitude for the

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past and for the future; and the worthy captain, who, on his side, felt a lively interest in this young man, so brave and so resolute, pressed his hand kindly, wishing him a pleasant journey.

Determined to put the advice of M. de Tréville in practice instantly, D'Artagnan directed his course towards the Rue des Fossoyeurs, in order to superintend the packing of his valise. On approaching the house, he perceived M. Bonacieux in morning costume, standing at his threshold. All that the prudent Planchet had said to him the preceding evening about the sinister character of the old man recurred to the mind of D'Artagnan, who looked at him with more attention than he had done before. In fact, in addition to that yellow, sickly paleness which indicates the insinuation of the bile in the blood, and which might, besides, be accidental, D'Artagnan remarked something perfidiously significant in the play of the wrinkled features of his countenance. A rogue does not laugh in the same way that an honest man does; a hypocrite does not shed the tears of a man of good faith. All falsehood is a mask; and however well made the mask may be, with a little attention we may always succeed in distinguishing it from the true face.

It appeared, then, to D'Artagnan, that M. Bonacieux wore a mask, and likewise that that mask was most disagreeable to look upon. In consequence of this feeling of repugnance, he was about to pass without speaking to him, but, as he had done the day before, M. Bonacieux accosted him.

"Well, young man," said he, "we appear to pass rather gay nights! Seven o'clock in the morning! *Peste!* you seem to reverse ordinary customs, and come home at the hour when other people are going out."

"No one can reproach you for anything of the kind,

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M. Bonacieux," said the young man; "you are a model for regular people. It is true that when a man possesses a young and pretty wife, he has no need to seek happiness elsewhere. Happiness comes to meet him, does it not, M. Bonacieux?"

Bonacieux became as pale as death, and grinned a ghastly smile.

"Ah, ah!" said Bonacieux, "you are a jocular companion! But where the devil were you gadding last night, my young master? It does not appear to be very clean in the cross-roads."

D'Artagnan glanced down at his boots, all covered with mud; but that same glance fell upon the shoes and stockings of the mercer, and it might have been said they had been dipped in the same mud-heap. Both were stained with splashes of mud of the same appearance.

Then a sudden idea crossed the mind of D'Artagnan. That little stout man, short and elderly, that sort of lackey, dressed in dark clothes, treated without ceremony by the men wearing swords who composed the escort, was Bonacieux himself. The husband had presided at the abduction of his wife.

A terrible inclination seized D'Artagnan to grasp the mercer by the throat and strangle him; but, as we have said, he was a very prudent youth, and he restrained himself. However, the revolution which appeared upon his countenance was so visible that Bonacieux was terrified at it, and he endeavored to draw back a step or two; but as he was standing before the half of the door which was shut, the obstacle compelled him to keep his place.

"Ah, but you are joking, my worthy man!" said D'Artagnan. "It appears to me that if my boots need a sponge, your stockings and shoes stand in equal need of a brush. May you not have been philandering a little also, M.

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Bonacieux? Oh, the devil! That's unpardonable in a man of your age, and who, besides, has such a pretty young wife as yours."

"Oh, Lord! no," said Bonacieux, "but yesterday I went to St. Mandé, to make some inquiries after a servant, as I cannot possibly do without one; and the roads were so bad that I brought back all this mud, which I have not yet had time to remove."

The place named by Bonacieux as that which had been the object of his journey was a fresh proof in support of the suspicions D'Artagnan had conceived. Bonacieux had named Mandé, because Mandé was in an exactly opposite direction from St. Cloud. This probability afforded him his first consolation. If Bonacieux knew where his wife was, one might, by extreme means, force the mercer to open his teeth, and let his secret escape. The question, then, was how to change this probability into a certainty.

"Pardon, my dear M. Bonacieux, if I don't stand upon ceremony," said D'Artagnan, "but nothing makes one so thirsty as want of sleep. I am parched with thirst. Allow me to take a glass of water in your appartement; you know that is never refused among neighbors."

Without waiting for the permission of his host, D'Artagnan went quickly into the house, and cast a rapid glance at the bed. It had not been used. Bonacieux had not been abed. He had only been back an hour or two; he had accompanied his wife to the place of her confinement, or else, at least, to the first relay.

"Thanks, M. Bonacieux," said D'Artagnan, emptying his glass, "that is all I wanted of you. I will now go up into my appartement. I will make Planchet brush my boots; and when he has done, I will, if you like, send him to you to brush your shoes."

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He left the mercer quite astonished at his singular farewell, and asking himself if he had not been a little inconsiderate.

At the top of the stairs he found Planchet in a great fright.

"Ah, Monsieur!" cried Planchet, as soon as he perceived his master, "here is more trouble. I thought you would never come in."

"What's the matter now, Planchet?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Oh! I give you a hundred, I give you a thousand times to guess, Monsieur, the visit I have received in your absence."

"When?"

"About half-an-hour ago, while you were at M. de Tréville's."

"Who has been here? Come, speak."

"M. de Cavois."

"M. de Cavois?"

"In person."

"The captain of the cardinal's Guards?"

"Himself."

"Did he come to arrest me?"

"I have no doubt he did, Monsieur, for all his wheedling manner."

"Was he so sweet, then?"

"Indeed, he was all honey, Monsieur."

"Indeed!"

"He came, he said, on the part of his Eminence, who wished you well, and to beg you to follow him to the Palais-Royal."[1]

"What did you answer him?"

[1] It was called the Palais-Cardinal before Richelieu gave it to the king.

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"That the thing was impossible, seeing that you were not at home, as he could see."

"Well, what did he say then?"

"That you must not fail to call upon him in the course of the day; and then he added in a low voice, 'Tell your master that his Eminence is very well disposed towards him, and that his fortune perhaps depends upon this interview.'"

"The snare is rather *maladroit* for the cardinal," replied the young man, smiling.

"Oh, I saw the snare, and I answered you would be quite in despair on your return."

"'Where has he gone?'" asked M. de Cavois.

"'To Troyes, in Champagne,'" I answered.

"'And when did he set out?'"

"'Yesterday evening.'"

"Planchet, my friend," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you are really a precious fellow."

"You will understand, Monsieur, I thought there would be still time, if you wish, to see M. de Cavois to contradict me by saying you were not yet gone. The falsehood would then lie at my door, and as I am not a gentleman, I may be allowed to lie."

"Be of good heart, Planchet, you shall preserve your reputation as a veracious man. In a quarter of an hour we set off."

"That's the advice I was about to give Monsieur; and where are we going, may I ask, without being too curious?"

"*Pardieu!* in the opposite direction to that which you said I was gone. Besides, are you not as anxious to learn news of Grimaud, Mousqueton, and Bazin, as I am to know what has become of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said Planchet, "and I will go as soon as you please. Indeed, I think provincial air will suit

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us much better just now than the air of Paris. So then —"

"So then, pack up our luggage, Planchet, and let us be off. On my part, I will go out with my hands in my pockets, that nothing may be suspected. You may join me at the Hôtel des Gardes. By the way, Planchet, I think you are right with respect to our host, and that he is decidedly a frightfully low wretch."

"Ah, Monsieur, you may take my word when I tell you anything. I am a physiognomist, I assure you."

D'Artagnan went out first, as had been agreed upon. Then, in order that he might have nothing to reproach himself with, he directed his steps, for the last time, towards the residences of his three friends. No news had been received of them; only a letter, all perfumed, and of an elegant writing in small characters, had come for Aramis. D'Artagnan took charge of it. Ten minutes afterwards Planchet joined him at the stables of the Hôtel des Gardes. D'Artagnan, in order that there might be no time lost, had saddled his horse himself.

"That 's well," said he to Planchet, when the latter added the portmanteau to the equipment. "Now saddle the other three horses."

"Do you think, then, Monsieur, that we shall travel faster with two horses apiece?" said Planchet, with his shrewd air.

"No, Monsieur jester," replied D'Artagnan; "but with our four horses we may bring back our three friends, if we should have the good fortune to find them living."

"Which is a great chance," replied Planchet, "but we must not despair of the mercy of God."

"Amen!" said D'Artagnan, getting into his saddle.

As they went from the Hôtel des Gardes, they separated, leaving the street at opposite ends, one having to quit Paris

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by the Barrière de la Villette, and the other by the Barrière Montmartre, to meet again beyond St. Denis, — a strategetic manœuvre which, having been executed with equal punctuality, was crowned with the most fortunate results. D'Artagnan and Planchet entered Pierrefitte together.

Planchet was more courageous, it must be admitted, by day than by night. His natural prudence, however, never forsook him for a single instant. He had forgotten not one of the incidents of the first journey, and he looked upon everybody he met on the road as an enemy. It followed that his hat was forever in his hand, which procured him some severe reprimands from D'Artagnan, who feared that his excess of politeness would lead people to think he was the lackey of a man of no consequence.

Nevertheless, whether the passengers were really touched by the urbanity of Planchet, or whether this time nobody was posted on the young man's road, our two travellers arrived at Chantilly without any accident, and alighted at the tavern of Great St. Martin, the same at which they had stopped on their first journey.

The host, on seeing a young man followed by a lackey with two extra horses, advanced respectfully to the door. Now, as they had already travelled eleven leagues, D'Artagnan thought it time to stop, whether Porthos were or were not in the inn. Perhaps it would not be prudent to ask at once what had become of the musketeer. The result of these reflections was that D'Artagnan, without asking information of any kind, alighted, commended the horses to the care of his lackey, entered a small room destined to receive those who wished to be alone, and desired the host to bring him a bottle of his best wine and as good a breakfast as possible, — a desire which further corroborated the high opinion the innkeeper had formed of the traveller at first sight.

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D'Artagnan was therefore served with miraculous celerity. The regiment of the Guards was recruited among the first gentlemen of the kingdom; and D'Artagnan, followed by a lackey, and travelling with four magnificent horses, despite the simplicity of his uniform, could not fail to make a sensation. The host desired himself to serve him; which D'Artagnan perceiving, ordered two glasses to be brought, and commenced the following conversation.

"My faith, my good host," said D'Artagnan, filling the two glasses, "I asked for a bottle of your best wine, and if you have deceived me, you will be punished in what you have sinned; for seeing that I hate drinking by myself, you shall drink with me. Take your glass then, and let us drink. But what shall we drink to, so as to avoid wounding any susceptibility? Let us drink to the prosperity of your establishment."

"Your Lordship does me much honor," said the host, "and I thank you sincerely for your kind wish."

"But don't mistake," said D'Artagnan, "there is more selfishness in my toast than perhaps you may think, — for it is only in prosperous establishments that one is well received. In hôtels that do not flourish, everything is in confusion, and the traveller is a victim to the embarrassments of his host. Now, I travel a great deal, particularly on this road, and I wish to see all innkeepers making a fortune."

"It seems to me," said the host, "that this is not the first time I have had the honor of seeing Monsieur."

"Bah, I have passed perhaps ten times through Chantilly, and out of the ten times I have stopped three or four times at your house at least. Why I was here only ten or twelve days ago. I was conducting some friends, musketeers, one of whom, by the bye, had a dispute with

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a stranger, an unknown, — a man who sought a quarrel with him, for I don't know what."

"Exactly so," said the host; "I remember it perfectly. Is it not M. Porthos that your Lordship means?"

"Yes, that is my companion's name. My God, my dear host, tell me if anything has happened to him?"

"Your Lordship must have observed that he could not continue his journey."

"Why, to be sure, he promised to rejoin us, and we have seen nothing of him."

"He has done us the honor to remain here."

"What! he has done you the honor to remain here?"

"Yes, Monsieur, in this house; and we are even a little uneasy — "

"On what account?"

"Of certain expenses he has contracted."

"Well; but whatever expenses he may have incurred, I am sure he is in a condition to pay them."

"Ah, Monsieur, you infuse genuine balm into my blood. We have made considerable advances; and this very morning the surgeon declared that if M. Porthos did not pay him, he should look to me, as it was I who had sent for him."

"Porthos is wounded, then?"

"I cannot tell you, Monsieur."

"What! You cannot tell me? Surely you ought to be able to tell me better than any other person."

"Yes; but in our situation we must not say all we know, — particularly as we have been warned that our ears should answer for our tongues."

"Well, can I see Porthos?"

"Certainly, Monsieur. Take the stairs on your right; go up the first flight and knock at No. 1. Only warn him that it is you."

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"Why should I do that?"

"Because, Monsieur, some mischief might happen to you."

"Of what kind, in the name of wonder?"

"M. Porthos may imagine you belong to the house, and in a fit of passion might run his sword through you or blow out your brains."

"What have you done to him, then?"

"We have asked him for money."

"The devil! Ah, I can understand that. It is a demand that Porthos takes very ill when he is not in funds; but I know he must be so at present."

"We thought so too, Monsieur. As our house is carried on very regularly, and we make out our bills every week, at the end of eight days we presented our account; but it appeared we had chosen an unlucky moment, for at the first word on the subject, he sent us to all the devils. It is true he had been playing the day before."

"Playing the day before! And with whom?"

"Lord, who can say, Monsieur? With some gentleman who was travelling this way, to whom he proposed a game of *lansquenet*."

"That 's it, then, and the foolish fellow has lost all he had?"

"Even to his horse, Monsieur; for when the gentleman was about to set out, we perceived that his lackey was saddling M. Porthos's horse, as well as his master's. When we observed this to him, he told us to trouble ourselves about our own business, as this horse belonged to him. We also informed M. Porthos of what was going on; but he told us we were scoundrels, to doubt a gentleman's word, and that as he had said the horse was his, it must be so."

"That 's Porthos all over," murmured D'Artagnan.

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"Then," continued the host, "I replied that as from the moment we seemed not likely to come to a good understanding with respect to payment, I hoped that he would have at least the kindness to grant the favor of his custom to my brother host of the Golden Eagle; but M. Porthos replied that, my house being the best, he should remain where he was. This reply was too flattering to allow me to insist on his departure. I confined myself then to begging him to give up his chamber, which is the handsomest in the hôtel, and to be satisfied with a pretty little room on the third floor; but to this M. Porthos replied that as he every moment expected his mistress, who was one of the greatest ladies in the court, I might easily comprehend that the chamber he did me the honor to occupy in my house was itself very mean for the visit of such a personage. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the truth of what he said, I thought proper to insist; but without even giving himself the trouble to enter into any discussion with me, he took one of his pistols, laid it on his table, day and night, and said that at the first word that should be spoken to him about removing, either within the house or out of it, he would blow out the brains of the person who should be so imprudent as to meddle with a matter which only concerned himself. Since that time, Monsieur, nobody enters his chamber but his servant."

"What! Mousqueton is here, then?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur. Five days after your departure, he came back, and in a very bad condition, too. It appears that he had met with disagreeables, likewise, on his journey. Unfortunately, he is more nimble than his master; so that for the sake of his master, he puts us all under his feet, and as he thinks we might refuse what he asked for, he takes all he wants without asking at all."

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"The fact is," said D'Artagnan, "I have always observed a great degree of intelligence and devotedness in Mousqueton."

"That is possible, Monsieur; but suppose I should happen to be brought in contact, even four times a year, with such intelligence and devotedness, — why, I should be a ruined man!"

"No, for Porthos will pay you."

"Hum!" said the host, in a doubtful tone.

"The favorite of a great lady will not be allowed to be inconvenienced for such a paltry sum as he owes you."

"If I durst say what I believe on that head —"

"What you believe?"

"I ought rather to say, what I know."

"What you know?"

"And even what I am sure of."

"And of what are you so sure?"

"I would say that I know this great lady."

"You?"

"Yes; I."

"And how do you know her?"

"Oh, Monsieur, if I could believe I might trust in your discretion."

"Speak! By the faith of a gentleman, you shall have no cause to repent of your confidence."

"Well, Monsieur, you understand that uneasiness makes us do many things."

"What have you done?"

"Oh, nothing which was not right in the character of a creditor."

"Well?"

"M. Porthos gave us a note for his duchess, ordering us to put it in the post. This was before his servant came.

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As he could not leave his chamber, it was necessary to charge us with this commission."

"And then?"

"Instead of putting the letter in the post, which is never safe, I took advantage of the journey of one of my lads to Paris, and ordered him to convey the letter to this duchess himself. This was fulfilling the intentions of M. Porthos, who had desired us to be so careful of this letter, was it not?"

"Nearly so."

"Well, Monsieur, do you know who this great lady is?"

"No; I have heard Porthos speak of her, that 's all."

"Do you know who this pretended duchess is?"

"I repeat to you, I don't know her."

"Why, she is the old wife of a procurator of the Châtelet, Monsieur, named Madame Coquenard, who, although she is at least fifty, still gives herself jealous airs. It struck me as very odd that a princess should live in the Rue aux Ours."

"But how do you know all this?"

"Because she flew into a great passion on receiving the letter, saying that M. Porthos was a weathercock, and that she was sure it was for some woman he had received this wound."

"Has he been wounded, then?"

"Oh, good Lord! what have I said?"

"You said that Porthos had received a sword-cut."

"Yes, but he has forbidden me so strictly to say so!"

"And why so?"

"Zounds, Monsieur! because he had boasted that he would perforate the stranger with whom you left him in dispute; whereas the stranger, on the contrary, in spite of all his rhodomontades quickly threw him on his back.

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As M. Porthos is a very boastful man, he insists that nobody shall know he has received this wound except the duchess, whom he endeavored to interest by an account of his adventure."

"It is a wound that confines him to his bed?"

"Ah, and a master stroke, too, I assure you. Your friend's soul must stick tight to his body."

"Were you there, then?"

"Monsieur, I followed them from curiosity, so that I saw the combat without the combatants seeing me."

"And what took place?"

"Oh! the affair was not long, I assure you. They placed themselves on guard; the stranger made a feint and a lunge, and that so rapidly that when M. Porthos came to the *parade*, he had already three inches of steel in his breast. He immediately fell backwards. The stranger placed the point of his sword at his throat; and M. Porthos, finding himself at the mercy of his adversary, acknowledged himself conquered. Upon which the stranger asked his name, and learning that it was Porthos, and not D'Artagnan, he assisted him to rise, brought him back to the hôtel, mounted his horse, and disappeared."

"So it was with M. d'Artagnan this stranger meant to quarrel?"

"It appears so."

"And do you know what has become of him?"

"No, I never saw him until that moment, and have not seen him since."

"Very well; I know all that I wish to know. Porthos's chamber is, you say, on the first story, No. 1?"

"Yes, Monsieur, the handsomest in the inn, — a chamber that I could have let ten times over."

"Bah! Be satisfied," said D'Artagnan, laughing;

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"Porthos will pay you with the money of the Duchesse Coquenard."

"Oh, Monsieur, procurator's wife or duchess, if she will but loosen her purse-strings, it will be all the same; but she positively answered that she was tired of the exigencies and infidelities of M. Porthos, and that she would not send him a denier."

"And did you convey this answer to your guest?"

"We took good care not to do that; he would have found in what fashion we had executed his commission."

"So that he still expects his money?"

"Oh, Lord, yes, Monsieur! Yesterday he wrote again; but it was his servant who this time put the letter in the post."

"Do you say the procurator's wife is old and ugly?"

"Fifty at least, Monsieur, and not at all handsome, according to Pathaud's account."

"In that case, you may be quite at ease; she will soon be softened. Besides, Porthos cannot owe you much."

"How, not much! Twenty good pistoles, already, without reckoning the doctor. He denies himself nothing; it may easily be seen he has been accustomed to live well."

"Never mind; if his mistress abandons him, he will find friends, I will answer for it. So, my dear host, be not uneasy, and continue to take all the care of him that his situation requires."

"Monsieur has promised me not to open his mouth about the procurator's wife, and not to say a word of the wound?"

"That 's agreed; you have my word."

"Oh, he would kill me!"

"Don't be afraid; he is not so much of a devil as he ppears."

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Saying these words, D'Artagnan went upstairs, leaving his host a little better satisfied with respect to two things in which he appeared to be very much interested, — his debt and his life.

At the top of the stairs, upon the most conspicuous door of the corridor, was traced in black ink a gigantic No. 1. D'Artagnan knocked, and upon the bidding to come in which came from inside, he entered the chamber.

Porthos was in bed, and was playing a game at *lansquenet* with Mousqueton, to keep his hand in; while a spit loaded with partridges was turning before the fire, and on each side of a large chimney-piece, over two chafing-dishes, were boiling two stewpans, from which exhaled a double odor of rabbit and fish stews, rejoicing to the smell. In addition to this he perceived that the top of a wardrobe and the marble of a commode were covered with empty bottles.

At the sight of his friend, Porthos uttered a loud cry of joy; and Mousqueton, rising respectfully, yielded his place to him, and went to give an eye to the two stewpans, of which he appeared to have the particular inspection.

"Ah, *pardieu!* Is that you?" said Porthos to D'Artagnan. "You are right welcome. Excuse my not coming to meet you; but," added he, looking at D'Artagnan with a certain degree of uneasiness, "you know what has happened to me?"

"No."

"Has the host told you nothing, then?"

"I asked after you, and came up as soon as I could."

Porthos seemed to breathe more freely.

"And what has happened to you, my dear Porthos?" continued D'Artagnan.

"Why, on making a thrust at my adversary, whom I had already hit three times, and whom I meant to finish

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with the fourth, I put my foot on a stone, slipped, and strained my knee."

"Truly?"

"Honor! Luckily for the rascal, for I should have left him dead on the spot, I assure you."

"And what became of him?"

"Oh, I don't know; he had enough, and set off without waiting for the rest. But you, my dear D'Artagnan, what has happened to you?"

"So that this strain of the knee," continued D'Artagnan, "my dear Porthos, keeps you in bed?"

"My God, that 's all. I shall be about again in a few days."

"Why did you not have yourself conveyed to Paris? You must be cruelly bored here."

"That was my intention; but, my dear friend, I have one thing to confess to you."

"What 's that?"

"It is that as I was cruelly bored, as you say, and as I had the seventy-five pistoles in my pocket which you had distributed to me, in order to amuse myself I invited a gentleman who was travelling this way to walk up, and proposed a cast of dice. He accepted my challenge, and, my faith, my seventy-five pistoles passed from my pocket to his, without reckoning my horse, which he won into the bargain. But you, my dear D'Artagnan?"

"What can you expect, my dear Porthos; a man is not privileged in all ways," said D'Artagnan. "You know the proverb, 'Unlucky at play, lucky in love.' You are too fortunate in your love for play not to take its revenge. What consequence can the reverses of fortune be to you? Have you not, happy rogue that you are, — have you not your duchess, who cannot fail to come to your aid?"

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"Well, you see, my dear D'Artagnan, with what ill luck I play," replied Porthos, with the most careless air in the world. "I wrote to her to send me fifty louis or so, of which I stood absolutely in need on account of my accident."

"Well?"

"Well, she must be at her country-seat, for she has not answered me."

"Truly?"

"No; so I yesterday addressed another epistle to her, still more pressing than the first. But you are here, my dear fellow, let us speak of you. I confess I began to be very uneasy on your account."

"But your host behaves very well towards you, as it appears, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan, directing the sick man's attention to the full stewpans and the empty bottles.

"So, so," replied Porthos. "Only three or four days ago the impertinent jackanapes gave me his bill, and I was forced to turn both him and his bill out of the door; so that I am here something in the fashion of a conqueror, holding my position, as it were, by conquest. So you see, being in constant fear of being forced from that position, I am armed to the teeth."

"And yet," said D'Artagnan, laughing, "it appears to me that from time to time you must make *sorties*." And he again pointed to the bottles and the stewpans.

"Not I, unfortunately!" said Porthos. "This miserable strain confines me to my bed; but Mousqueton forages, and brings in provisions. Friend Mousqueton, you see that we have a reinforcement, and we must have an increase of supplies."

"Mousqueton," said D'Artagnan, "you must render me a service."

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"What, Monsieur?"

"You must give your recipe to Planchet. I may be besieged in my turn, and I shall not be sorry for him to be able to let me enjoy the same advantages with which you gratify your master."

"Lord, Monsieur! there is nothing more easy," said Mousqueton, with a modest air. "One only needs to be sharp, that's all. I was brought up in the country, and my father in his leisure time was something of a poacher."

"And what did he do the rest of his time?"

"Monsieur, he carried on a trade which I have always thought satisfactory."

"Which?"

"As it was a time of war between the Catholics and the Huguenots, and as he saw the Catholics exterminate the Huguenots and the Huguenots exterminate the Catholics, — all in the name of religion, — he adopted a mixed belief which permitted him to be sometimes a Catholic, sometimes a Huguenot. Now, he was accustomed to walk, with his fowling-piece on his shoulder, behind the hedges which border the roads, and when he saw a Catholic coming alone, the Protestant religion immediately prevailed in his mind. He lowered his gun in the direction of the traveller; then, when he was within ten paces of him, he commenced a conversation which almost always ended by the traveller's abandoning his purse to save his life. It goes without saying that when he saw a Huguenot coming, he felt himself filled with such ardent Catholic zeal that he could not understand how, a quarter of an hour before, he had been able to have any doubts upon the superiority of our holy religion. For my part, Monsieur, I am Catholic, — my father, faithful to his principles, having made my elder brother a Huguenot."

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"And what was the end of this worthy man?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Oh, of the most unfortunate kind, Monsieur. One day he was surprised in a lonely road between a Huguenot and a Catholic, with both of whom he had before had business, and who both knew him again; so they united against him and hung him on a tree. Then they came and boasted of their fine exploit in the cabaret of the next village, where my brother and I were drinking."

"And what did you do?" said D'Artagnan.

"We let them tell their story out," replied Mousqueton. "Then, as in leaving the cabaret they took different directions, my brother went and hid himself on the road of the Catholic, and I on that of the Huguenot. Two hours after, all was over; we had done the business of both, admiring the foresight of our poor father, who had taken the precaution to bring each of us up in a different religion."

"Well, I must allow, as you say, your father was a very intelligent fellow. And you say in his leisure moments the worthy man was a poacher?"

"Yes, Monsieur, and it was he who taught me to lay a snare and ground a line. The consequence is that when I saw our shabby host wanted to feed us upon lumps of fat meat fit for laborers, which did not at all suit two such delicate stomachs as ours, I had recourse to a little of my old trade. While walking near the wood of Monsieur the Prince, I laid a few snares in the runs; and while reclining on the banks of his Highness's pieces of water, I slipped a few lines into his fish-ponds. So that now, thanks be to God, we do not want, as Monsieur can testify, for partridges, rabbits, carp, or eels,—all light, wholesome food, suitable for the sick."

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"But the wine," said D'Artagnan, "who furnishes the wine? Your host?"

"That is to say, yes and no."

"How yes and no?"

"He furnishes it, it is true, but he does not know that he has that honor."

"Explain yourself, Mousqueton; your conversation is full of instructive things."

"This is it, Monsieur. It has so chanced that I met with a Spaniard in my peregrinations who had seen many countries, and among them the New World."

"What connection can the New World have with the bottles which are on the commode and the wardrobe?"

"Patience, Monsieur, everything will come in its turn."

"You are right, Mousqueton. I leave it to you, while I listen."

"This Spaniard had in his service a lackey who had accompanied him in his voyage to Mexico. This lackey was my compatriot; and we became the more intimate from there being many resemblances of character between us. We loved sporting of all kinds better than anything; so that he related to me how in the plains of the Pampas the natives hunt the tiger and the wild bull with simple running-nooses which they throw round the necks of those terrible animals. At first I would not believe that they could attain such a degree of skill as to throw to a distance of twenty or thirty paces the end of a cord with such nicety; but in face of the proof I was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the recital. My friend placed a bottle at the distance of thirty paces, and at each cast he caught the neck of the bottle in his running-noose. I practised this exercise, and as nature has endowed me with some faculties, at this day I can throw the lasso with any man in the world. Well, do you understand, Mon-

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sieur? Our host has a well-furnished cellar the key of which never leaves him; only this cellar has a ventilating hole. Now, through this ventilating hole I throw my lasso, and as I now know in which part of the cellar is the best wine, that 's my point for sport. You see, Monsieur, what the New World has to do with the bottles which are on the commode and the wardrobe. Now, will you taste our wine, and without prejudice say what you think of it?"

"Thank you, my friend, thank you; unfortunately, I have just breakfasted."

"Well," said Porthos, "arrange the table, Mousqueton, and while we breakfast, D'Artagnan will relate to us what has happened to him during the ten days since he left us."

"Willingly," said D'Artagnan.

While Porthos and Mousqueton were breakfasting, with the appetites of convalescents, and with that brotherly cordiality which unites men in misfortune, D'Artagnan related how Aramis, being wounded, was obliged to stop at Crèvecœur, how he had left Athos fighting at Amiens with four men who accused him of being a coiner, and how he, D'Artagnan, had been forced to run the Comte de Wardes through the body in order to reach England.

But there the confidence of D'Artagnan stopped. He only added that on his return from Great Britain he had brought back four magnificent horses, — one for himself, and one for each of his companions; then he informed Porthos that the one intended for him was already installed in the stable of the tavern.

At this moment Planchet entered, to inform his master that the horses were sufficiently refreshed, and that it would be possible to sleep at Clermont.

As D'Artagnan was tolerably re-assured with regard to

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Porthos, and as he was anxious to obtain news of his two other friends, he held out his hand to the wounded man, and told him he was about to resume his route in order to continue his researches. For the rest, as he reckoned upon returning by the same route, in seven or eight days, if Porthos were still at the Great St. Martin, he would call for him on his way.

Porthos replied that in all probability his sprain would not permit him to depart yet awhile. Besides, it was necessary he should stay at Chantilly, to wait for the answer from his duchess.

D'Artagnan wished that answer might be prompt and favorable; and having again recommended Porthos to the care of Mousqueton, and paid his bill to the host, he resumed his route with Planchet, already relieved of one of his led horses.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE THESIS OF ARAMIS.

D'Artagnan had said nothing to Porthos of his wound or of his procurator's wife. Our Béarnais was a prudent lad, however young he might be. Consequently he had appeared to believe all that the vain-glorious musketeer had told him, convinced that no friendship will hold out against a surprised secret, particularly when pride is deeply interested in that secret. Besides, we feel always a sort of mental superiority over those whose lives we know better than they suppose. In his projects of intrigue for the future, and determined as he was to make his three friends the instruments of his fortune, D'Artagnan was not sorry at getting into his grasp beforehand the invisible strings by which he reckoned upon moving them.

And yet, as he journeyed along, a profound sadness weighed upon his heart. He thought of that young and pretty Madame Bonacieux who was to have paid him the price of his devotedness; but let us hasten to say that this sadness possessed the young man less from the regret of the happiness he had missed, than from the fear he entertained that some serious misfortune had befallen the poor woman. For himself, he had no doubt she was a victim of the cardinal's vengeance; and, as was well known, the vengeance of his Eminence was terrible. How he had found grace in the eyes of the minister, he did not know; but without doubt M. de Cavois would

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have revealed this to him, if the captain of the Guards had found him at home.

Nothing makes time pass more quickly or more shortens a journey than a thought which absorbs in itself all the faculties of the organization of him who thinks. External existence then resembles a sleep of which this thought is the dream. By its influence, time has no longer measure, space has no longer distance. We depart from one place, and arrive at another, that is all. Of the interval passed, nothing remains in the memory but a vague mist in which a thousand confused images of trees, mountains, and landscapes are lost. It was as a prey to this hallucination that D'Artagnan travelled, at whatever pace his horse pleased, the six or eight leagues that separated Chantilly from Crèvecœur, without his being able to remember on his arrival in the village any of the things he had passed or met with on the road.

There only his memory returned to him. He shook his head, perceived the cabaret at which he had left Aramis, and putting his horse to the trot, he shortly pulled up at the door.

This time it was not a host, but a hostess who received him. D'Artagnan was a physiognomist. His eye took in at a glance the plump, cheerful countenance of the mistress of the place, and he at once perceived there was no occasion for dissembling with her, or of fearing anything from one blessed with such a joyous physiognomy.

"My good dame," asked D'Artagnan, "can you tell me what is become of one of my friends, whom we were obliged to leave here about a dozen days ago?"

"A handsome young man, three or four and twenty years old, mild, amiable, and well made?"

"That is he, — wounded in the shoulder."

"Just so. Well, Monsieur, he is still here."

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"Ah, *pardieu!* My dear dame," said D'Artagnan, springing from his horse, and throwing the bridle to Planchet, "you restore me to life; where is this dear Aramis? Let me embrace him, I am in a hurry to see him again."

"Pardon, Monsieur, but I doubt whether he can see you at this moment."

"Why so? Has he a lady with him?"

"Jesus! What do you mean by that? Poor lad! No, Monsieur, he has not a lady with him."

"With whom is he, then?"

"With the curate of Montdidier and the superior of the Jesuits of Amiens."

"Good Heavens!" cried D'Artagnan, "is the poor fellow worse, then?"

"No, Monsieur, quite the contrary; but after his illness grace touched him, and he determined to take orders."

"That's it!" said D'Artagnan, "I had forgotten that he was only a musketeer for a time."

"Monsieur still insists upon seeing him?"

"More than ever."

"Well, Monsieur has only to take the right-hand staircase in the courtyard, and knock at No. 5 on the second floor."

D'Artagnan walked quickly in the direction indicated, and found one of those exterior staircases that are still to be seen in the yards of our old-fashioned taverns. But there was no getting at the place of sojourn of the future abbé; the defiles of the chamber of Aramis were as well guarded as the gardens of Armida. Bazin was stationed in the corridor, and barred his passage with the more intrepidity that, after many years of expectation, Bazin found himself near a result of which he had ever been ambitious.

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In fact, the dream of poor Bazin had always been to serve a churchman; and he awaited with impatience the moment, always in the future, when Aramis would throw aside the uniform and assume the cassock. The daily renewed promise of the young man, that the moment would not long be delayed, had alone kept him in the service of a musketeer, — a service in which, he said, his soul was in constant jeopardy.

Bazin was then at the height of joy. In all probability, this time his master would not retract. The union of physical pain with moral uneasiness had produced the effect so long desired. Aramis, suffering at once in body and mind, had at length fixed his eyes and his thoughts upon religion, and he had considered as a warning from Heaven the double accident which had happened to him; that is to say, the sudden disappearance of his mistress and the wound in his shoulder.

It may be easily understood that in the present disposition of his master nothing could be more disagreeable to Bazin than the arrival of D'Artagnan, which might cast his master back again into that vortex of mundane affairs which had so long carried him away. He resolved, then, to defend the door bravely; and as, betrayed by the mistress of the inn, he could not say that Aramis was absent, he endeavored to prove to the new-comer that it would be the height of indiscretion to disturb his master in his pious conference, which had commenced with the morning, and would not, as Bazin said, terminate before night.

But D'Artagnan took very little heed of the eloquent discourse of M. Bazin; and as he had no desire to support a polemic discussion with his friend's valet, he simply moved him out of the way with one hand, and with the other turned the handle of the door No. 5. The door opened, and D'Artagnan went into the chamber.

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Aramis, in a black gown, his head enveloped in a sort of round, flat cap, not much unlike a *calotte*, was seated before an oblong table, covered with rolls of paper and enormous volumes in folio. At his right hand was placed the superior of the Jesuits, and on his left the curate of Montdidier. The curtains were half drawn, and only admitted the mysterious light calculated for beatific reveries. All the mundane objects that generally strike the eye on entering the room of a young man, particularly when that young man is a musketeer, had disappeared as if by enchantment; and for fear, no doubt, that the sight of them might bring his master back to ideas of this world, Bazin had laid his hands upon sword, pistols, plumed hat, and embroideries and laces of all kinds and sorts. In their stead D'Artagnan thought he perceived in an obscure corner a discipline cord suspended from a nail in the wall.

At the noise made by D'Artagnan in entering, Aramis lifted up his head, and beheld his friend; but to the great astonishment of the young man, the sight of him did not produce much effect upon the musketeer, so completely was his mind detached from the things of this world.

"Good-day, dear D'Artagnan," said Aramis; "believe me, I am glad to see you."

"So am I delighted to see you," said D'Artagnan, "although I am not yet sure that it is Aramis I am speaking to."

"To himself, my friend, to himself! but what makes you doubt it?"

"I was afraid I had made a mistake in the chamber, and that I had found my way into the apartment of some churchman. Then another error seized me on seeing you in company with these gentlemen, — I was afraid you were dangerously ill."

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The two men in black, who guessed D'Artagnan's meaning, darted at him a glance which might have been thought threatening; but D'Artagnan took no heed of it.

"I disturb you, perhaps, my dear Aramis," continued D'Artagnan, "for by what I see, I am led to believe that you are confessing to these gentlemen."

Aramis colored imperceptibly. "You disturb me? Oh, quite the contrary, dear friend, I swear; and as a proof of what I say, permit me to declare I am rejoiced to see you safe and sound."

"Ah, he 'll come round," thought D'Artagnan; "that 's not bad!"

"This gentleman, who is my friend, has just escaped from a serious danger," continued Aramis with unction, pointing to D'Artagnan with his hand, and addressing the two ecclesiastics.

"Praise God, Monsieur," replied they, bowing together.

"I have not failed to do so, your Reverences," replied the young man, returning their salutation.

"You arrive in good time, dear D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "and by taking part in our discussion may assist us with your intelligence. Monsieur the Principal of Amiens, Monsieur the Curate of Montdidier, and I are arguing certain theological questions in which we have been much interested; I shall be delighted to have your opinion."

"The opinion of a swordsman can have very little weight," replied D'Artagnan, who began to be uneasy at the turn things were taking, "and you had better be satisfied, believe me, with the knowledge of these gentlemen."

The two men in black bowed in their turn.

"On the contrary," replied Aramis, "your opinion will be very valuable. The question is this: Monsieur the

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Principal thinks that my thesis ought to be dogmatic and didactic."

"Your thesis! Are you then making a thesis?"

"Without doubt," replied the Jesuit. "In the examination which precedes ordination, a thesis is always requisite."

"Ordination!" cried D'Artagnan, who could not believe what the hostess and Bazin had successively told him; and he gazed, half stupefied, upon the three persons before him.

"Now," continued Aramis, taking the same graceful position in his easy-chair that he would have assumed in bed, and complacently examining his hand, which was as white and plump as that of a woman, and which he held in the air to cause the blood to descend, — "now, as you have heard, D'Artagnan, Monsieur the Principal is desirous that my thesis should be dogmatic, while I, for my part, would rather it should be ideal. This is the reason why Monsieur the Principal has proposed to me the following subject, which has not yet been treated upon, and in which I perceive there is matter for magnificent elaboration, — *Utraque manus in benedicendo clericis inferioribus necessaria est.*"

D'Artagnan, whose erudition we are well acquainted with, evinced no more interest on hearing this quotation than he had at that of M. de Tréville in allusion to the gifts he pretended that D'Artagnan had received from the Duke of Buckingham.

"Which means," resumed Aramis, that he might perfectly understand, — "The two hands are indispensable for priests of the inferior orders, when they bestow the benediction."

"An admirable subject!" cried the Jesuit.

"Admirable and dogmatic!" repeated the curate, who,

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about as strong as D'Artagnan with respect to Latin, carefully watched the Jesuit in order to keep step with him, and repeated his words like an echo.

As to D'Artagnan, he remained perfectly insensible to the enthusiasm of the two men in black.

"Yes, admirable! *prorsus admirabile!*" continued Aramis; "but which requires a profound study of both the Scriptures and the Fathers. Now, I have confessed to these learned ecclesiastics, and that in all humility, that the duties of mounting guard and the service of the king have caused me to neglect study a little. I should find myself, therefore, more at my ease, *facilius natans*, in a subject of my own choice, which would be to these hard theological questions what morals are to metaphysics in philosophy."

D'Artagnan began to be tired, and so did the curate.

"See what an exordium!" cried the Jesuit.

"Exordium," repeated the curate, for the sake of saying something. "*Quemadmodum inter cœlorum immensitatem.*"

Aramis cast a glance upon D'Artagnan to see what effect all this produced, and found his friend gaping enough to split his jaws.

"Let us speak French, my father," said he to the Jesuit; "M. d'Artagnan will enjoy our conversation better."

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "I am fatigued with riding, and all this Latin confuses me."

"Certainly," replied the Jesuit, a little put out, while the curate, greatly delighted, turned upon D'Artagnan a look full of gratitude. "Well, let us see what is to be derived from this gloss. Moses, the servant of God — he was but a servant, please to understand — Moses blessed with the hands; he held out both his arms while the Hebrews beat their enemies, and then he blessed them with his two

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hands. Besides, what does the gospel say? *Imponite manus*, and not *manum*, — place the *hands*, and not the *hand*."

"Place the *hands*," repeated the curate, with a gesture.

"Saint Peter, on the contrary, of whom the popes are the successors," continued the Jesuit: "*porrige digitos*, — present the fingers. Are you there, now?"

"*Certes*," replied Aramis, in a pleased tone, "but the thing is subtle."

"the *fingers*," resumed the Jesuit, "Saint Peter blessed with the *fingers*. The Pope, therefore, blesses with the fingers. And with how many fingers does he bless? With *three* fingers, to be sure, — one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Ghost."

All crossed themselves. D'Artagnan thought it was proper to follow this example.

"The Pope is the successor of Saint Peter, and represents the three divine powers; the rest — *ordines inferiores* — of the ecclesiastical hierarchy bless in the name of the holy archangels and angels. The most humble clerks such as our deacons and sacristans, bless with holy-water sprinklers, which resemble an infinite number of blessing fingers. There is the subject simplified. *Argumentum omni denudatum ornamento.* I could make of that subject two volumes of the size of this," continued the Jesuit; and in his enthusiasm he struck a Saint Chrysostom in folio, which made the table bend beneath its weight.

D'Artagnan trembled.

"*Certes*," said Aramis, "I do justice to the beauties of this thesis; but at the same time I perceive it would be overwhelming for me. I had chosen this text, — tell me, dear D'Artagnan, if it is not to your taste, — *Non inutile est desiderium in oblatione;* that is, A little regret is not unsuitable in an offering to the Lord."

"Stop there!" cried the Jesuit, "for that thesis touches

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closely upon heresy. There is a proposition almost like it in the 'Augustinus' of the heresiarch Jansenius, whose book will, sooner or later, be burned by the hands of the executioner. Take care, my young friend. You are inclining towards false doctrines, my young friend; you will be lost."

"You will be lost," said the curate, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"You touch that famous point of free-will which is a mortal rock. You face the insinuations of the Pelagians and the demi-Pelagians."

"But, my reverend —" replied Aramis, a little amazed by the shower of arguments that poured upon his head.

"How will you prove," continued the Jesuit, without allowing him time to speak, "that we ought to regret the world when we offer ourselves to God? Listen to this dilemma: God is God, and the world is the Devil. To regret the world is to regret the Devil; that is my conclusion."

"And that is mine also," said the curate.

"But for Heaven's sake —" resumed Aramis.

"*Desideras diabolum*, unhappy man!" cried the Jesuit.

"He regrets the Devil! Ah, my young friend," added the curate, groaning, "do not regret the Devil, I implore you!"

D'Artagnan felt himself bewildered. It seemed to him as though he were in a madhouse, and was becoming as mad as those he saw. He was, however, forced to hold his tongue from not comprehending half the language they employed.

"But listen to me, then," resumed Aramis with politeness mingled with a little impatience. "I do not say I regret; no, I will never pronounce that sentence, which would not be orthodox."

The Jesuit raised his hands towards heaven, and the curate did the same.

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"No; but pray grant me that it is acting with an ill grace to offer to the Lord only that with which we are perfectly disgusted? Don't you think so, D'Artagnan?"

"I think so, indeed," cried he.

The Jesuit and the curate quite started from their chairs.

"This is the point of departure; it is a syllogism. The world is not wanting in attractions. I quit the world; then I make a sacrifice. Now, the Scripture says positively, 'Make a sacrifice unto the Lord.'"

"That is true," said his antagonists.

"And then," said Aramis, pinching his ear to make it red, as he rubbed his hands to make them white, — "and then I made a certain *rondeau* upon it last year, which I showed to M. Voiture, and that great man paid me a thousand handsome compliments."

"A *rondeau!*" said the Jesuit, disdainfully.

"A *rondeau!*" said the curate, mechanically.

"Repeat it! repeat it!" cried D'Artagnan; "it will make a little change."

"Not so, for it is religious," replied Aramis; "it is theology in verse."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan.

"Here it is," said Aramis, with a little look of diffidence, which, however, was not exempt from a shade of hypocrisy: —

"Vous qui pleurez un passé plein de charmes,
Et qui traînez des jours infortunés,
Tous vos malheurs se verront terminés,
Quand à Dieu seul vous offrirez vos larmes,
Vous qui pleurez!

You who weep for pleasures fled,
While dragging on a life of care,
All your woes will melt in air,
If to God your tears are shed,
You who weep!"

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D'Artagnan and the curate appeared pleased. The Jesuit persisted in his opinion. "Beware of a profane taste in your theological style. What says Augustine on this subject: *Severus sit clericorum sermo.*"

"Yes, let the sermon be clear," said the curate.

"Now," hastily interrupted the Jesuit, on seeing that his acolyte was going astray, — "now, your thesis would please the ladies; it would have the success of one of M. Patru's pleadings."

"Please God!" cried Aramis, transported.

"There it is," cried the Jesuit; "the world still speaks within you in a loud voice, *altissimâ voce.* You follow the world, my young friend, and I tremble lest grace prove not efficacious."

"Be satisfied, my reverend father, I can answer for myself."

"Mundane presumption!"

"I know myself, Father; my resolution is irrevocable."

"Then you persist in continuing that thesis?"

"I feel myself called upon to treat that, and no other. I will see about the continuation of it, and to-morrow I hope you will be satisfied with the corrections I shall have made in consequence of your advice."

"Work slowly," said the curate; "we leave you in an excellent tone of mind."

"Yes, the ground is all sown," said the Jesuit, "and we have not to fear that one portion of the seed may have fallen upon stone, another upon the highway, or that the birds of heaven have eaten the rest, *aves cœli comederunt illam.*"

"Plague stifle you and your Latin!" said D'Artagnan, who began to feel all his patience exhausted.

"Farewell, my son," said the curate, "till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow, rash youth," said the Jesuit, "You

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promise to become one of the lights of the Church. Heaven grant that this light prove not a devouring fire!"

D'Artagnan, who for an hour past had been gnawing his nails with impatience, was beginning to attack the quick.

The two men in black rose, bowed to Aramis and D'Artagnan, and advanced towards the door. Bazin, who had been standing listening to all this controversy with a pious jubilation, sprang towards them, took the breviary of the curate and the missal of the Jesuit, and walked respectfully before them to clear their way.

Aramis conducted them to the foot of the stairs, and then immediately came up again to D'Artagnan, whose senses were still in a state of confusion.

When left alone, the two friends at first kept an embarrassed silence. It however became necessary for one of them to break it first, and as D'Artagnan appeared determined to leave that honor to his companion, Aramis said, "You see that I am returned to my fundamental ideas."

"Yes, efficacious grace has touched you, as that gentleman said just now."

"Oh, these plans of retreat have been formed for a long time. You have often heard me speak of them, have you not, my friend?"

"Yes; but I confess I always thought you jested."

"With such things! Oh, D'Artagnan!"

"The devil! Why, people jest with death."

"And people are wrong, D'Artagnan; for death is the door which leads to perdition or to salvation."

"Granted; but if you please, let us not theologize, Aramis. You must have had enough for to-day. As for me, I have almost forgotten the little Latin I have ever known. Then I confess to you that I have eaten noth-

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ing since ten o'clock this morning, and I am devilishly hungry."

"We will dine directly, my friend; only you must please to remember that this is Friday. Now, on such a day I can neither eat flesh, nor see it eaten. If you can be satisfied with my dinner, — it consists of cooked tetragones and fruits."

"What do you mean by tetragones?" asked D'Artagnan, uneasily.

"I mean spinach," replied Aramis; "but on your account I will add some eggs, and that is a serious infraction of the rule, — for eggs are meat, since they engender chickens."

"This feast is not very succulent; but never mind, I will put up with it for the sake of remaining with you."

"I am grateful to you for the sacrifice," said Aramis; "but if your body be not greatly benefited by it, be assured your soul will."

"And so, Aramis, you are decidedly going into the Church? What will our two friends say? What will M. de Tréville say? They will treat you as a deserter, I warn you."

"I do not enter the Church; I re-enter it. I deserted the Church for the world, for you know that I forced myself when I became a musketeer."

"I? I know nothing about it."

"You don't know how I quitted the seminary?"

"Not at all."

"This is my history, then. Besides, the Scriptures say, 'Confess yourselves one to another,' and I confess to you, D'Artagnan."

"And I give you absolution beforehand. You see I am a good sort of a man."

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"Do not jest about holy things, my friend."

"Go on, then, I listen."

"I had been at the seminary from nine years old; in three days I should have been twenty. I was about to become an abbé, and all was arranged. One evening I went, according to custom, to a house which I frequented with much pleasure: when one is young, what can be expected? — one is weak. An officer who saw me, with a jealous eye, reading the 'Lives of the Saints' to the mistress of the house, entered suddenly, and without being announced. That evening I had translated an episode of Judith, and had just communicated my verses to the lady, who gave me all sorts of compliments, and leaning on my shoulder, was reading them a second time with me. Her pose, which, I must admit, was rather free, wounded this officer. He said nothing; but when I went out he followed, and quickly came up with me. 'Monsieur the Abbé,' said he, 'do you like blows with a cane?' 'I cannot say, Monsieur,' answered I; 'no one has ever dared to give me any.' 'Well, listen to me, then, Monsieur the Abbé! If you venture again into the house in which I have met you this evening, I will dare it myself.' I really think I must have been frightened. I became very pale; I felt my legs fail me; I sought for a reply, but could find none, — I was silent. The officer waited for this reply, and seeing it so long coming, he burst into a laugh, turned upon his heel, and re-entered the house. I returned to my seminary.

"I am a gentleman born, and my blood is warm, as you may have remarked, my dear D'Artagnan. The insult was terrible, and although unknown to the rest of the world, I felt it live and fester at the bottom of my heart. I informed my superiors that I did not feel myself sufficiently prepared for ordination, and at my request the

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ceremony was postponed for a year. I sought out the best fencing-master in Paris. I made an agreement with him to take a lesson every day, and every day for a year I took that lesson. Then, on the anniversary of the day on which I had been insulted, I hung my cassock on a peg, assumed the costume of a cavalier, and went to a ball given by a lady friend of mine, and to which I knew my man was invited. It was in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, close to La Force. As I expected, my officer was there. I went up to him as he was singing a love ditty and looking tenderly at a lady, and interrupted him exactly in the middle of the second couplet. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'does it still displease you that I should frequent a certain house in Rue Payenne? And would you still cane me if I took it into my head to disobey you?' The officer looked at me with astonishment, and then said, 'What is your business with me, Monsieur? I do not know you.' 'I am,' said I, 'the little abbé who reads the "Lives of the Saints," and translates Judith into verse.' 'Ah, ah! I recollect now,' said the officer, in a jeering tone; 'well, what do you want with me?' 'I want you to spare time to take a walk with me.' 'To-morrow morning, if you like, and with the greatest pleasure.' 'No, not to-morrow morning, if you please, but immediately.' 'If you absolutely insist.' 'I do insist upon it.' 'Come, then. Ladies,' said the officer, 'do not disturb yourselves; allow me time just to kill this gentleman, and I will return and finish the last couplet.'

"We went out. I took him to the Rue Payenne, to exactly the same spot where, a year before, at the very same hour, he had paid me the compliment I have related to you. It was a superb moonlight night. We immediately drew, and at the first pass I laid him stark dead."

"The devil!" cried D'Artagnan.

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"Now," continued Aramis, "as the ladies did not see the singer come back, and as he was found in the Rue Payenne with a great sword-wound through his body, it was supposed that I had accommodated him thus; and the matter created some scandal which obliged me to renounce the cassock for a time. Athos, whose acquaintance I made about that period, and Porthos, who had in addition to my lessons taught me some effective tricks of fence, prevailed upon me to solicit the uniform of a musketeer. The king entertained great regard for my father, who had fallen at the siege of Arras, and the uniform was granted. You may understand that the moment has come for me to re-enter the bosom of the Church."

"And why to-day, rather than yesterday or to-morrow? What has happened to you to-day, to raise all these melancholy ideas?"

"This wound, my dear D'Artagnan, has been a warning to me from Heaven."

"This wound? Bah, it is now nearly healed, and I am sure it is not that which gives you the most pain."

"What then?" said Aramis, blushing.

"You have one at heart, Aramis, one deeper and more painful, — a wound made by a woman."

The eye of Aramis kindled in spite of himself.

"Ah," said he, dissembling his emotion under a feigned carelessness, "do not talk of such things. I think of such things, and suffer love-pains? *Vanitas vanitatum!* According to your idea, then, my brain is turned. And for whom, — for some *grisette*, some chambermaid with whom I have trifled in some garrison? Fie!"

"Pardon, my dear Aramis, but I thought you carried your eyes higher."

"Higher? And who am I, to nourish such ambition?

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A poor musketeer, a beggar, and unknown, — who hates slavery, and finds himself ill-placed in the world."

"Aramis, Aramis!" cried D'Artagnan, looking at his friend with an air of doubt.

"Dust I am, and to dust I return. Life is full of humiliations and sorrows," continued he, becoming still more melancholy; "all the ties which attach him to life break in the hand of man, particularly the golden ties. Oh, my dear D'Artagnan," resumed Aramis, giving to his voice a slight tone of bitterness, "trust me! Conceal your wounds when you have any; silence is the last joy of the unhappy. Beware of giving any one the clew to your griefs; the curious suck our tears as flies suck the blood of a wounded hart."

"Alas, my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan, in his turn heaving a profound sigh, "that is my history you are relating!"

"How?"

"Yes; a woman whom I love, whom I adore, has just been torn from me by force. I do not know where she is or whither they have conducted her. She is perhaps a prisoner; she is perhaps dead!"

"Yes, but you have at least this consolation, that you can say to yourself she has not quitted you voluntarily, that if you learn no news of her, it is because all communication with you is interdicted; while I —"

"Well?"

"Nothing," replied Aramis, "nothing."

"So you renounce the world, then, forever; that is a settled thing, — a resolution registered?"

"Forever! You are my friend to-day; to-morrow you will be no more to me than a shadow, or rather, even, you will no longer exist. As for the world, it is a sepulchre, and nothing else."

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"The devil! All this is very sad which you tell me."

"What will you? My vocation commands me; it carries me away."

D'Artagnan smiled, but made no answer.

Aramis continued, "And yet, while I do belong to the earth, I wish to speak of you,—of our friends."

"And on my part," said D'Artagnan, "I wished to speak of you, but I find you so completely detached from everything! To love you cry, 'Fie! Friends are shadows! The world is a sepulchre!'"

"Alas, you will find it so yourself," said Aramis, with a sigh.

"Well, then, let us say no more about it," said D'Artagnan; "and let us burn this letter, which, no doubt, announces to you some fresh infidelity of your *grisette* or your chambermaid."

"What letter?" cried Aramis, eagerly.

"A letter which was sent to your abode in your absence, and which was given to me for you."

"But from whom is that letter?"

"Oh, from some heart-broken waiting-woman, some desponding *grisette;* from Madame de Chevreuse's chambermaid, perhaps, who was obliged to return to Tours with her mistress, and who, in order to appear smart and attractive, stole some perfumed paper, and sealed her letter with a duchess's coronet."

"What do you say?"

"Hold! I must have lost it," said the young man, maliciously, pretending to search for it. "But fortunately the world is a sepulchre; the men, and consequently the women, are but shadows, and love is a sentiment to which you cry, 'Fie, fie!'"

"D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan," cried Aramis, "you are killing me!"

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"Well, here it is at last!" said D'Artagnan, as he drew the letter from his pocket.

Aramis made a bound, seized the letter, read it, or rather devoured it, his countenance radiant.

"This same waiting-maid seems to have an agreeable style," said the messenger, carelessly.

"Thanks, D'Artagnan, thanks!" cried Aramis, almost in a state of delirium. "She was forced to return to Tours; she is not faithless; she still loves me! Come my friend, come, let me embrace you. Happiness almost stifles me!"

The two friends began to dance around the venerable Saint Chrysostom, kicking about famously the sheets of the thesis, which had fallen on the floor.

At that moment Bazin entered with the spinach and the omelet.

"Be off, you wretch!" cried Aramis, throwing his skull-cap in his face. "Return whence you came; take back those horrible vegetables, and that poor kickshaw! Order a larded hare, a fat capon, mutton leg dressed with garlic, and four bottles of old Burgundy."

Bazin, who looked at his master, without comprehending the cause of this change, in a melancholy manner, allowed the omelet to slip into the spinach, and the spinach on to the floor.

"Now is the moment to consecrate your existence to the King of kings," said D'Artagnan, "if you persist in offering him a civility. *Non inutile desiderium oblatione.*"

"Go to the devil with your Latin. Let us drink, my dear D'Artagnan, *morbleu!* let us drink while the wine is fresh! Let us drink heartily, and while we do so, tell me a little of what is going on in the world yonder."

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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WIFE OF ATHOS.

"We have now to search for Athos," said D'Artagnan to the vivacious Aramis, when he had informed him of all that had passed since their departure from the capital, and an excellent dinner had made one of them forget his thesis and the other his fatigue.

"Do you think, then, that any harm can have happened to him?" asked Aramis. "Athos is so cool, so brave, and handles his sword so skilfully."

"No doubt. Nobody has a higher opinion of the courage and skill of Athos than I have; but I like better to hear my sword clang against lances than against staves. I fear lest Athos should have been beaten down by serving-men. Those fellows strike hard, and don't leave off in a hurry. This is why I wish to set out again as soon as possible."

"I will try to accompany you," said Aramis, "though I scarcely feel in a condition to mount on horseback. Yesterday I undertook to employ that cord which you see hanging against the wall, but pain prevented my continuing the pious exercise."

"That's the first time I ever heard of anybody trying to cure gunshot wounds with cat-o'-nine-tails; but you were ill, and illness renders the head weak, therefore you may be excused."

"When do you mean to set out?"

"To-morrow at daybreak. Sleep as soundly as you

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can to-night, and to-morrow, if you can, we will take our departure together."

"Till to-morrow, then," said Aramis; "for iron-nerved as you are, you must need repose."

The next morning, when D'Artagnan entered Aramis's chamber, he found him at the window.

"What are you looking at?" asked D'Artagnan.

"My faith! I am admiring three magnificent horses which the stable-boys are leading about. It would be a pleasure worthy of a prince to travel upon such horses."

"Well, my dear Aramis, you may enjoy that pleasure, for one of those three horses is yours."

"Ah, bah! which?"

"Whichever of the three you like, I have no preference."

"And the rich caparison, is that mine too?"

"Without doubt."

"You laugh, D'Artagnan."

"No, I have left off laughing, now that you speak French."

"What, those rich holsters, that velvet housing, that saddle studded with silver, — are they all for me?"

"For you and nobody else, as the horse which paws the ground is mine, and the other horse, which is caracoling, belongs to Athos."

"*Peste!* They are three superb animals!"

"I am glad they please you."

"Why, it must have been the king who made you such a present."

"Certainly it was not the cardinal; but don't trouble yourself whence they come, think only that one of the three is your property."

"I choose that which the red-headed boy is leading."

"It is yours!"

"Good Heaven! That is enough to drive away all my

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dolor; I could mount him with thirty balls in my body. On my soul, handsome stirrups! *Holà*, Bazin, come here this minute."

Bazin appeared on the threshold, dull and spiritless.

"Furbish my sword, put my hat to rights, brush my cloak, and load my pistols!" said Aramis.

"That last order is useless," interrupted D'Artagnan; "there are loaded pistols in your holsters."

Bazin sighed.

"Come, M. Bazin, make yourself easy," said D'Artagnan; "people of all conditions gain the kingdom of heaven."

"Monsieur was already such a good theologian," said Bazin, almost weeping; "he might have become a bishop, and perhaps a cardinal."

"Well, but my poor Bazin, reflect a little. Of what use is it to be a churchman, pray? You do not avoid going to war by that means; you see the cardinal is about to make the next campaign, helm on head and partisan in hand. And M. de Nogaret de la Valette, what do you say of him? He is a cardinal likewise. Ask his lackey how often he has had to prepare lint for him."

"Alas!" sighed Bazin. "I know it, Monsieur; everything is turned topsy-turvy in the world nowadays."

While this dialogue was going on, the two young men and the poor lackey descended.

"Hold my stirrup, Bazin," cried Aramis; and Aramis sprang into his saddle with his usual grace and agility, but after a few vaults and curvets of the noble animal his rider felt his pains come on so insupportably that he turned pale, and became unsteady in his seat. D'Artagnan, who, foreseeing such an event, had kept his eye on him, sprang towards him, caught him in his arms, and assisted him to his chamber.

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"That 's all right, my dear Aramis, take care of yourself," said he; "I will go alone in search of Athos."

"You are a man of brass," replied Aramis.

"No, I have good luck, that is all. But how do you mean to pass your time till I come back? No more theses, no more glosses upon the fingers or upon benedictions, hey?"

Aramis smiled. "I will make verses," said he.

"Yes, I dare say; verses perfumed with the odor of the billet from the attendant of Madame de Chevreuse. Teach Bazin prosody; that will console him. As to the horse, ride him a little every day, and that will accustom you to his manœuvres."

"Oh, make yourself easy on that head," replied Aramis. "You will find me ready to follow you."

They took leave of each other, and in ten minutes after, having commended his friend to the cares of the hostess, and Bazin, D'Artagnan was trotting along in the direction of Amiens.

How was he going to find Athos? Should he find him at all? The position in which he had left him was critical. He probably had succumbed. This idea, while darkening his brow, drew several sighs from him, and caused him to formulate to himself a few vows of vengeance. Of all his friends, Athos was the eldest, and the least resembling him in appearance, in his tastes and sympathies.

Yet he entertained a marked preference for this gentleman. The noble and distinguished air of Athos, those flashes of greatness which from time to time broke out from the shade in which he voluntarily kept himself, that unalterable equality of temper which made him the most pleasant companion in the world, that forced and cynical gayety, that bravery which might have been termed blind,

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if it had not been the result of the rarest coolness, — such qualities attracted more than the esteem, more than the friendship of D'Artagnan; they attracted his admiration.

Indeed, when placed beside M. de Tréville, the elegant and noble courtier, Athos in his most cheerful days might advantageously sustain a comparison. He was of middle height; but his person was so admirably shaped and so well proportioned that more than once in his struggles with Porthos he had overcome the giant whose physical strength was proverbial among the Musketeers. His head, with piercing eyes, a straight nose, a chin cut like that of Brutus, had altogether an indefinable character of grandeur and grace. His hands, of which he took little care, were the despair of Aramis, who cultivated his with almond paste and perfumed oil. The sound of his voice was at once penetrating and melodious; and then, that which was inconceivable in Athos, who was always retiring, was that delicate knowledge of the world and of the usages of the most brilliant society, — those manners of a high degree which appeared, as if unconsciously to himself, in his least actions.

If a repast were on foot, Athos presided over it better than any other, placing every guest exactly in the rank which his ancestors had earned for him, or that he had made for himself. If a question in heraldry were started, Athos knew all the noble families of the kingdom, their genealogy, their alliances, their coats-of-arms, and the origin of them. Etiquette had no minutiæ unknown to him. He knew what were the rights of the great landowners. He was profoundly versed in hunting and falconry, and had, one day, when conversing on this great art, astonished even Louis XIII. himself, who took a pride in being considered a past-master therein.

Like all the great nobles of that period, Athos rode and

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fenced to perfection. But still further, his education had been so little neglected, even with respect to scholastic studies, so rare at this time among gentlemen, that he smiled at the scraps of Latin which Aramis sported, and which Porthos pretended to understand. Two or three times, even, to the great astonishment of his friends, he had, when Aramis allowed some rudimental error to escape him, replaced a verb in its right tense and a noun in its case. Besides, his probity was irreproachable, in an age in which soldiers compromised so easily with their religion and their consciences, lovers with the rigorous delicacy of our era, and the poor with God's seventh commandment. This Athos, then, was a very extraordinary man.

And yet this nature so distinguished, this creature so beautiful, this essence so fine, was seen to turn insensibly towards material life, as old men turn towards physical and moral imbecility. Athos, in his hours of gloom, — and these hours were frequent, — was extinguished as to the whole of the luminous portion of him, and his brilliant side disappeared as into profound darkness.

Then the demi-god vanished; he remained scarcely a man. His head hanging down, his eye dull, his speech slow and painful, Athos would look for hours together at his bottle, his glass, or at Grimaud, who, accustomed to obey him by signs, read in the faint glance of his master his least desire, and satisfied it immediately. If the four friends were assembled at one of these moments, a word, thrown forth occasionally with a violent effort, was the share Athos furnished to the conversation. In exchange for his silence Athos drank enough for four, and without appearing to be otherwise affected by wine than by a more marked contraction of the brow and by a deeper sadness.

D'Artagnan, whose inquiring disposition we are acquainted with, had not — whatever interest he had in

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satisfying his curiosity on this subject — been able to assign any cause for these fits, or for the periods of their recurrence. Athos never received any letters; Athos never had concerns which all his friends did not know.

It could not be said that it was wine which produced this sadness; for in truth, he only drank to combat this sadness, which wine however, as we have said, rendered still darker. This excess of bilious humor could not be attributed to play; for unlike Porthos, who accompanied the variations of chance with songs or oaths, Athos when he won remained as unmoved as when he lost. He had been known, in the circle of the Musketeers, to win in one night three thousand pistoles, to lose them even to the gold embroidered belt for gala days, win all this again, with the addition of a hundred louis, without his beautiful eyebrow being heightened or lowered half a line, without his hands losing their pearly hue, without his conversation, which was cheerful that evening, ceasing to be calm and agreeable.

Neither was it, as with our neighbors, the English, an atmospheric influence which darkened his countenance; for the sadness generally became more intense towards the fine season of the year. June and July were the terrible months with Athos.

For the present he had no anxiety. He shrugged his shoulders when people spoke of the future. His secret, then, was in the past, as had often been vaguely said to D'Artagnan.

This mysterious shade, spread over his whole person, rendered still more interesting the man whose eyes or mouth, even in the most complete intoxication, had never revealed anything, however skilfully questions had been put to him.

"Well," thought D'Artagnan, "poor Athos is perhaps

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at this moment dead, and dead by my fault, — for it was I who dragged him into this affair, of which he did not know the origin, of which he is ignorant of the result, and from which he can derive no advantage."

"Without reckoning, Monsieur," added Planchet to his master's audibly expressed reflections, "that we perhaps owe our lives to him. Do you remember how he cried, 'On, D'Artagnan, on, I am taken'? And when he had discharged his two pistols, what a terrible noise he made with his sword! One might have said that twenty men, or rather twenty mad devils, were fighting."

These words redoubled the eagerness of D'Artagnan, who urged his horse, though he stood in need of no incitement, and they proceeded at a rapid pace. About eleven o'clock in the morning they perceived Amiens, and at half-past eleven they were at the door of the cursed inn.

D'Artagnan had often meditated against the perfidious host one of those hearty vengeances which offer consolation while they are hoped for. He entered the hostelry with his hat pulled over his eyes, his left hand on the pommel of the sword, and cracking his whip with his right hand.

"Do you remember me?" said he to the host, who advanced to greet him.

"I have not that honor, Monseigneur," replied the latter, his eyes dazzled by the brilliant style in which D'Artagnan travelled.

"What, you don't know me?"

"No, Monseigneur."

"Well, two words will refresh your memory. What have you done with that gentleman against whom you had the audacity, about twelve days ago, to make an accusation of passing false money?"

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The host became as pale as death; for D'Artagnan had assumed a threatening attitude, and Planchet modelled himself after his master.

"Ah, Monseigneur, do not mention it!" cried the host, in the most pitiable voice imaginable. "Ah, Monseigneur, how dearly have I paid for that fault, unhappy wretch as I am!"

"That gentleman, I say, what is become of him?"

"Deign to listen to me, Monseigneur, and be merciful! Sit down, in mercy!"

D'Artagnan, mute with anger and anxiety, took a seat in the threatening attitude of a judge. Planchet glared fiercely over the back of his armchair.

"Here is the story, Monseigneur," resumed the trembling host; "for I now recollect you. It was you who rode off at the moment I had that unfortunate difference with the gentleman you speak of."

"Yes, it was I; so you may plainly perceive that you have no mercy to expect if you do not tell me the whole truth."

"Condescend to listen to me, and you shall know all."

"I listen."

"I had been warned by the authorities that a celebrated coiner of bad money would arrive at my inn, with several of his companions, all disguised as guards or musketeers. Monseigneur, I was furnished with a description of your horses, your lackeys, your countenances, — nothing was omitted."

"Go on, go on!" said D'Artagnan, who quickly understood whence such an exact description had come.

"I took then, in conformity with the orders of the authorities, who sent me a reinforcement of six men, such measures as I thought necessary to get possession of the persons of the pretended coiners."

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"Again!" said D'Artagnan, whose ears chafed terribly under the repetition of this word *coiners*.

"Pardon me, Monseigneur, for saying such things, but they form my excuse. The authorities had terrified me, and you know that an innkeeper must keep on good terms with the authorities."

"But once again, that gentleman, — where is he? What is become of him? Is he dead? Is he living?"

"Patience, Monseigneur, we are coming to it. There happened then that which you know, and of which your precipitate departure," added the host, with an acuteness that did not escape D'Artagnan, "appeared to authorize the issue. That gentleman, your friend, defended himself desperately. His lackey, who, by an unforeseen piece of ill luck, had quarrelled with the officers, disguised as stable-lads — "

"Miserable scoundrel!" cried D'Artagnan, "you were all in the plot, then! And I really don't know what prevents me from exterminating you all."

"Alas, Monseigneur, we were not in the plot, as you will soon see. Monsieur your friend (pardon for not calling him by the honorable name which no doubt he bears, but we do not know that name), Monsieur your friend, having disabled two men with his pistols, retreated fighting with his sword, with which he disabled one of my men, and stunned me with a blow of the flat side of it."

"You villain, will you finish?" cried D'Artagnan, "Athos, — what is become of Athos?"

"While fighting and retreating, as I have told Monseigneur, he found the door of the cellar stairs behind him, and as the door was open, he took out the key, and barricaded himself inside. As they were sure of finding him there, they left him alone."

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"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "you did not really wish to kill him; you only wished to imprison him."

"Good God! To imprison him, Monseigneur? Why, he imprisoned himself, I swear to you he did. In the first place he had made rough work of it; one man was killed on the spot, and two others were severely wounded. The dead man and the two wounded were carried off by their comrades, and I have heard nothing of either of them since. As for myself, as soon as I recovered my senses I went to Monsieur the Governor, to whom I related all that had passed, and asked what I should do with my prisoner. Monsieur the Governor was all astonishment. He told me he knew nothing about the matter, that the orders I had received did not come from him, and that if I had the audacity to mention his name as being concerned in this disturbance he would have me hanged. It appears that I made a mistake, Monsieur, that I had arrested the wrong person, and that he whom I ought to have arrested had escaped."

"But Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, whose impatience was increased by the disregard of the authorities, — "Athos, where is he?"

"As I was anxious to repair the wrongs I had done the prisoner," resumed the innkeeper, "I took my way straight to the cellar in order to set him at liberty. Ah, Monsieur, he was no longer a man, he was a devil! To my offer of liberty, he replied that it was nothing but a snare, and that before he came out he intended to impose his own conditions. I told him very humbly — for I could not conceal from myself the scrape I had got into by laying hands on one of his Majesty's Musketeers — I told him I was quite ready to submit to his conditions.

"'In the first place,' said he, 'I wish my lackey placed

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with me, fully armed.' We hastened to obey this order; for you will please to understand, Monsieur, we were disposed to do everything your friend could desire. M. Grimaud (he told us his name, although he does not talk much) M. Grimaud, then, went down to the cellar, wounded as he was; then his master, having admitted him, barricaded the door afresh, and ordered us to remain quietly in our own bar."

"But where is Athos now?" cried D'Artagnan. "Where is Athos?"

"In the cellar, Monsieur."

"What, you scoundrel! Have you kept him in the cellar all this time?"

"Merciful Heaven! No, Monsieur! We keep him in the cellar! You do not know what he is about in the cellar. Ah! if you could but persuade him to come out, Monsieur, I should owe you the gratitude of my whole life; I should adore you as my patron saint!"

"Then he is there? I shall find him there?"

"Without doubt you will, Monsieur; he persists in remaining there. We every day pass through the air-hole some bread at the end of a fork, and some meat when he asks for it; but alas! it is not of bread and meat of which he makes the greatest consumption. I once endeavored to go down with two of my servants; but he flew into a terrible rage. I heard the noise he made in loading his pistols, and his servant in loading his musketoon. Then, when we asked them what were their intentions, the master replied that he had forty charges to fire, and that he and his lackey would fire to the last one before he would allow a single soul of us to set foot in the cellar. Upon this I went and complained to the governor, who replied that I only had what I deserved,

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and that it would teach me to insult honorable gentlemen who took up their abode in my house."

"So that since that time —" replied D'Artagnan, totally unable to refrain from laughing at the pitiable face of the host.

"So that from that time, Monsieur," continued the latter, "we have led the most miserable life imaginable; for you must know, Monsieur, that all our provisions are in the cellar There is our wine in bottles, and our wine in casks; the beer, the oil, and the spices, the bacon, and sausages. And as we are prevented from going down there, we are forced to refuse food and drink to the travellers who come to the house; so that our hostelry is daily going to ruin. If your friend remains another week in my cellar I shall be a ruined man."

"And not more than justice, either, you ass! Could you not perceive by our appearance that we were people of quality, and not coiners, — say?"

"Yes, Monsieur, you are right," said the host. "But, hark, hark! there he is!"

"Somebody has disturbed him, without doubt," said D'Artagnan.

"But he must be disturbed," cried the host; "here are two English gentlemen just arrived."

"Well?"

"Well, the English like good wine, as you may know, Monsieur; these have asked for the best. My wife has perhaps requested permission of M. Athos to go into the cellar to satisfy these gentlemen; and he, as usual, has refused. Ah, good Heaven! There is the hullabaloo louder than ever!"

D'Artagnan, in fact, heard a great noise on the side next the cellar. He rose, and preceded by the host

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wringing his hands, and followed by Planchet with his musketoon, ready for use, he approached the scene of action.

The two gentlemen were exasperated; they had had a long ride, and were dying with hunger and thirst.

"But this is tyranny!" cried one of them, in very good French, though with a foreign accent, "that this madman will not allow these good people access to their own wine! Nonsense, let us break open the door, and if he is too far gone in his madness, well, we will kill him!"

"Softly, gentlemen!" said D'Artagnan, drawing his pistols from his belt, "you will kill nobody, if you please!"

"Good, good!" cried the calm voice of Athos, from the other side of the door, "let them just come in, these devourers of little children, and we shall see!"

Brave as they appeared to be, the two English gentlemen looked at each other hesitatingly. One might have thought there was in that cellar one of those famished ogres, — the gigantic heroes of popular legends, into whose cavern nobody could force their way with impunity.

There was a moment of silence; but at length the two Englishmen felt ashamed to draw back, and the angrier one descended the five or six steps which led to the cellar, and gave a kick against the door enough to split a wall.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, cocking his pistols, "I will take charge of the one at the top; you look to the one below. Ah, gentlemen, you want battle; and you shall have it."

"Good God!" cried the hollow voice of Athos, "I can hear D'Artagnan, I think."

"Yes," cried D'Artagnan, raising his voice in turn, "I am here, my friend."

"Ah, good, then," replied Athos, "we will teach them, these door-breakers!"

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The gentlemen had drawn their swords, but they found themselves taken between two fires. They still hesitated an instant; but, as before, pride prevailed, and a second kick split the door from bottom to top.

"Stand on one side, D'Artagnan, stand on one side," cried Athos. "I am going to fire!"

"Gentlemen," exclaimed D'Artagnan, whom reflection never abandoned, — "gentlemen, think of what you are about! Patience, Athos! You are running your heads into a very silly affair; you will be riddled. My lackey and I will have three shots at you, and you will get as many from the cellar. You will then have our swords, with which, I can assure you, my friend and I can play tolerably well. Let me conduct your business and my own. You shall soon have something to drink; I give you my word."

"If there is any left," grumbled the jeering voice of Athos.

The host felt a cold sweat creep down his back.

"How! 'If there is any left!'" murmured he.

"What the devil! there must be plenty left," replied D'Artagnan. "Be satisfied of that; these two cannot have drunk all the cellar. Gentlemen, return your swords to their scabbards."

"Well, provided you replace your pistols in your belt."

"Willingly."

And D'Artagnan set the example. Then, turning towards Planchet, he made him a sign to uncock his musketoon.

The Englishmen, convinced by these peaceful proceedings, sheathed their swords grumblingly. The history of Athos's imprisonment was then related to them; and as they were really gentlemen, they pronounced the host in the wrong.

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"Now, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "go up to your room again; and in ten minutes, I will answer for it, you shall have all you desire."

The Englishmen bowed and went upstairs.

"Now I am alone, my dear Athos," said D'Artagnan; "open the door, I beg of you."

"Instantly," said Athos.

Then was heard a great noise of fagots being removed, and of the groaning of posts; these were the counterscarps and bastions of Athos, which the besieged himself demolished.

An instant after, the broken door was removed, and the pale face of Athos appeared, who with a rapid glance took a survey of the surroundings.

D'Artagnan threw himself on his neck and embraced him tenderly. He then tried to draw him from his moist abode, but, to his surprise, he perceived that Athos staggered.

"You are wounded?" said he.

"I! not at all. I am dead drunk, that's all, and never did a man more strongly set about getting so. By the Lord, my good host! I must at least have drunk for my part a hundred and fifty bottles."

"Mercy!" cried the host, "if the lackey has drunk only half as much as the master, I am a ruined man."

"Grimaud is a well-bred lackey. He would never think of faring in the same manner as his master; he only drank from the cask. Mark! I don't think he put the faucet in again. Do you hear it? It is running now."

D'Artagnan burst into a laugh which changed the shiver of the host into a burning fever.

In the mean time, Grimaud appeared in his turn behind his master, with his musketoon on his shoulder, and his

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head shaking like one of those drunken satyrs in the pictures of Rubens. He was moistened before and behind with a greasy liquid which the host recognized as his best olive oil.

The four crossed the public room and proceeded to take possession of the best apartment in the house, which D'Artagnan occupied by authority.

In the mean time the host and his wife hurried down with lamps into the cellar, which had so long been interdicted to them, and where a frightful spectacle awaited them.

Beyond the fortifications through which Athos had made a breach in order to get out, and which were composed of fagots, planks, and empty casks, heaped up according to all the rules of the strategic art, they found, swimming in puddles of oil and wine, the bones and fragments of all the hams they had eaten; while a heap of broken bottles filled the whole left-hand corner of the cellar, and a tun, the cock of which was left running, was yielding, by this means, the last drop of its blood. "The image of devastation and death," as the ancient poet says, "reigned as over a field of battle."

Of fifty large sausages, suspended from the joists, scarcely ten remained.

Then the lamentations of the host and hostess pierced the vault of the cellar. D'Artagnan himself was moved by them. Athos did not even turn his head.

To grief succeeded rage. The host armed himself with a spit, and rushed into the chamber occupied by the two friends.

"Some wine!" said Athos, on perceiving the host.

"Some wine!" cried the stupefied host, "some wine! Why you have drunk more than a hundred pistoles' worth! I am a ruined man, lost, destroyed!"

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"Bah," said Athos, "we were always dry."

"If you had been contented with drinking, well and good; but you have broken all the bottles."

"You pushed me upon a heap which rolled down. That was your fault."

"All my oil is lost!"

"Oil is a sovereign balm for wounds; and my poor Grimaud here was obliged to dress those you had inflicted on him."

"All my sausages are gnawed!"

"There is an enormous quantity of rats in that cellar."

"You shall pay me for all this," cried the exasperated host.

"Triple ass!" said Athos, rising; but he sank down again immediately. He had tried his strength to the utmost. D'Artagnan came to his relief with his whip in his hand.

The host drew back and burst into tears.

"This will teach you," said D'Artagnan, "to treat the guests God sends you in a more courteous fashion."

"God? say the Devil!"

"My dear friend," said D'Artagnan, "if you annoy us in this manner we will all four go and shut ourselves up in your cellar, and we will see if the mischief is as great as you say."

"Oh, gentlemen," said the host, "I have been wrong. I confess it, but pardon to every sin! You are gentlemen, and I am a poor innkeeper. You will have pity on me."

"Ah, if you speak in that way," said Athos, "you will break my heart, and the tears will flow from my eyes as the wine flowed from the cask. We are not such devils as we appear to be. Come hither, and let us talk."

The host approached with hesitation.

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"Come hither, I say, and don't be afraid," continued Athos. "At the very moment when I was about to pay you, I had placed my purse on the table."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"That purse contained sixty pistoles; where is it?"

"Deposited with the justice; they said it was bad money."

"Very well; get me my purse back and keep the sixty pistoles."

"But Monseigneur knows very well that justice never lets go that which it once lays hold of. If it were bad money, there might be some hopes; but unfortunately, those were all good pieces."

"Manage the matter as well as you can, my good man; it does not concern me, the more so as I have not a livre left."

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "let us inquire further. Athos's horse, where is that?"

"In the stable."

"How much is it worth?"

"Fifty pistoles at most."

"It's worth eighty. Take it, and there ends the matter."

"What," cried Athos, "are you selling my horse, — my Bajazet? And pray upon what shall I make my campaign; upon Grimaud?"

"I have brought you another," said D'Artagnan.

"Another?"

"And a magnificent one!" cried the host.

"Well, since there is another finer and younger, why, you may take the old one; and let us drink."

"What?" asked the host, quite cheerful again.

"Some of that at the bottom, near the laths. There are twenty-five bottles of it left; all the rest were broken by my fall. Bring six of them."

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"Why, this man is a cask!" said the host, aside. "If he only remains here a fortnight, and pays for what he drinks, I shall soon re-establish my business."

"And don't forget," said D'Artagnan, "to bring up four bottles of the same sort for the two English gentlemen."

"And now," said Athos, "while they bring the wine, tell me, D'Artagnan, what has become of the others, come!"

D'Artagnan related how he had found Porthos in bed with a strained knee, and Aramis at a table between two theologians. As he finished, the host entered with the wine ordered and a ham which, fortunately for him, had been left out of the cellar.

"That 's well!" said Athos, filling his glass and that of his friend; "here 's to Porthos and Aramis! But you, D'Artagnan, what is the matter with you, and what has happened to you personally? You have a sad air."

"Alas," said D'Artagnan, "it is because I am the most unfortunate of all!"

"You unfortunate!" said Athos. "Come, how are you unfortunate? Tell me."

"Presently," said D'Artagnan.

"Presently! And why presently? Because you think I am drunk? D'Artagnan, remember this! My ideas are never so clear as when I have had plenty of wine. Speak, then, I am all ears."

D'Artagnan related his adventure with Madame Bonacieux. Athos listened to him without a frown; and when he had finished, said, "Trifles, only trifles!" That was his favorite word.

"You always say *trifles*, my dear Athos!" said D'Artagnan, "and that comes very ill from you, who have never loved."

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The deadened eye of Athos flashed, but only for a moment; it became dull and vacant as before.

"That 's true," said he, quietly, "for my part I have never loved."

"Acknowledge, then, you stony-heart," said D'Artagnan, "that you are wrong to be so hard upon us tender hearts."

"Tender hearts! Pierced hearts!" said Athos.

"What do you say?"

"I say that love is a lottery in which he who wins, wins death! You are very fortunate to have lost, believe me, my dear D'Artagnan. And if I have any counsel to give, it is, always lose!"

"She seemed to love me so!"

"She *seemed*, did she?"

"Oh, she *did* love me!"

"You child, why, there is not a man who has not believed, as you do, that his mistress loved him, and there lives not a man who has not been deceived by his mistress."

"Except you, Athos, who never had one."

"That 's true," said Athos, after a moment's silence, — "that's true! I never had one! Let us drink!"

"But then, philosopher that you are," said D'Artagnan, "instruct me, support me. I stand in need of being taught and consoled."

"Consoled for what?"

"For my misfortune."

"Your misfortune is laughable," said Athos, shrugging his shoulders; "I should like to know what you would say if I were to relate to you a real tale of love!"

"Which has happened to you?"

"Or one of my friends, what matters?"

"Tell it, Athos, tell it."

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"Better if I drink."

"Drink and relate, then."

"Not a bad idea!" said Athos, emptying and re-filling his glass. "The two things agree marvellously well."

"I am all attention," said D'Artagnan.

Athos collected himself, and in proportion as he did so, D'Artagnan saw that he became pale. He was at that period of intoxication in which vulgar drinkers fall and sleep. He kept himself upright and dreamed, without sleeping. This somnambulism of drunkenness had something frightful in it.

"You particularly wish it?" asked he.

"I pray for it," said D'Artagnan.

"Be it then as you desire. One of my friends, — one of my friends, please to observe, not myself," said Athos, interrupting himself with a melancholy smile, — "one of the counts of my province, — that is to say, of Berry, — noble as a Dandolo or a Montmorency, at twenty-five years of age fell in love with a girl of sixteen, beautiful as fancy can paint. Through the ingenuousness of her age beamed an ardent mind, not of the woman, but of the poet. She did not please; she intoxicated. She lived in a small town with her brother, who was a curate. Both had recently come into the country. They came nobody knew whence; but when seeing her so lovely and her brother so pious, nobody thought of asking whence they came. They were said, however, to be of good extraction. My friend, who was seigneur of the country, might have seduced her, or taken her by force, at his will, — for he was master. Who would have come to the assistance of two strangers, two unknown persons? Unfortunately he was an honorable man; he married her. The fool! the ass! the idiot!"

"How so, if he loved her?" asked D'Artagnan.

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"Wait," said Athos. "He took her to his château, and made her the first lady in the province; and in justice it must be allowed that she supported her rank becomingly."

"Well?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Well, one day when she was hunting with her husband," continued Athos, in a low voice, and speaking very quickly, "she fell from her horse and fainted. The count flew to her help, and as she appeared to be oppressed by her clothes, he ripped them open with his poniard, and in so doing laid bare her shoulder. D'Artagnan," said Athos, with a maniacal burst of laughter, "guess what she had on her shoulder."

"How can I tell?" said D'Artagnan.

"A *fleur-de-lis*," said Athos. "She was branded!"

Athos emptied at a single draught the glass he held in his hand.

"Horror!" cried D'Artagnan. "What do you tell me?"

"Truth, my friend. The angel was a demon; the poor young girl had stolen the sacred vessels from a church."

"And what did the count do?"

"The count was of the highest nobility. He had on his estates the rights of high and low tribunals. He tore the dress of the countess to pieces; he tied her hands behind her, and hanged her on a tree."

"Heavens, Athos, a murder?" cried D'Artagnan.

"No less," said Athos, as pale as a corpse. "But methinks, I need wine!" and he seized by the neck the last bottle that was left, put it to his mouth, and emptied it at a single draught, as he would have emptied an ordinary glass.

Then he let his head sink upon his two hands, while D'Artagnan stood before him, stupefied.

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"That has cured me of beautiful, poetical, and loving women," said Athos, after a considerable pause, raising his head, and forgetting to continue the fiction of the count. "God grant you as much! Let us drink."

"Then she is dead?" stammered D'Artagnan.

"*Parbleu!*" said Athos. "But hold out your glass. Some ham, my boy, or we can't drink."

"And her brother?" added D'Artagnan, timidly.

"Her brother?" replied Athos.

"Yes, the priest."

"Oh, I inquired after him for the purpose of hanging him likewise; but he was beforehand with me, he had quitted the curacy the night before."

"Was it ever known who this miserable fellow was?"

"He was doubtless the first lover and the accomplice of the fair lady. A worthy man, who had pretended to be a curate for the purpose of getting his mistress married, and securing her a position. He has been hanged and quartered, I hope."

"My God, my God!" cried D'Artagnan, quite stunned by the relation of this horrible adventure.

"Taste some of this ham, D'Artagnan; it is exquisite," said Athos, cutting a slice, which he placed on the young man's plate. "What a pity it is there were only four like this in the cellar. I could have drunk fifty bottles more."

D'Artagnan could no longer endure this conversation, which had made him bewildered. Allowing his head to sink upon his two hands, he pretended to sleep.

"These young fellows can none of them drink," said Athos, looking at him with pity, "and yet this is one of the best!"

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RETURN.

D'ARTAGNAN was astounded by the terrible confidence of Athos; yet many things appeared very obscure to him in this half revelation. In the first place it had been made by a man quite drunk to one who was half drunk; and yet, in spite of the uncertainty which the vapor of three or four bottles of Burgundy carries with it to the brain, D'Artagnan, when awaking on the following morning, had all the words of Athos as present to his memory as if they then fell from his mouth, — they had been so impressed upon his mind. All this doubt only gave rise to a more lively desire of arriving at a certainty, and he went into his friend's chamber with a fixed determination of renewing the conversation of the preceding evening; but he found Athos quite himself again, — that is to say, the most shrewd and impenetrable of men. Besides which, the musketeer, after having exchanged a hearty shake of the hand with him, broached the matter first.

"I was pretty drunk yesterday, D'Artagnan," said he. "I can tell that by my tongue, which was swollen and hot this morning, and by my pulse, which was very tremulous. I wager that I uttered a thousand extravagances."

While saying this he looked at his friend with an earnestness that embarrassed him.

"No," replied D'Artagnan, "if I recollect well what you said, it was nothing out of the common way."

"Ah, you surprise me. I thought I had told you a

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most lamentable history." And he looked at the young man as if he would read the bottom of his heart.

"My faith," said D'Artagnan, "it appears that I was more drunk than you, since I remember nothing of the kind."

Athos did not trust this reply, and he resumed: "You cannot have failed to remark, my dear friend, that every one has his particular kind of drunkenness, sad or gay. My drunkenness is always sad, and when I am thoroughly drunk my mania is to relate all the lugubrious histories which my foolish nurse inculcated into my brain. That is my failing, — a capital failing, I admit; but with that exception, I am a good drinker."

Athos spoke this in so natural a manner that D'Artagnan was shaken in his conviction.

"It is that, then," replied the young man, anxious to find out the truth, — "it is that, then, I remember as we remember a dream. We were speaking of hanging."

"Ah, you see how it is," said Athos, becoming still paler, but yet attempting to laugh; "I was sure it was so, — the hanging of people is my nightmare."

"Yes, yes," replied D'Artagnan, "I remember now; yes, it was about — stop a minute — yes, it was about a woman."

"That 's it," replied Athos, becoming almost livid; "that is my grand story of the fair lady, and when I relate that, I must be very drunk."

"Yes, that was it," said D'Artagnan, "the story of a tall, fair lady, with blue eyes."

"Yes, who was hanged."

"By her husband, who was a nobleman of your acquaintance," continued D'Artagnan, looking intently at Athos.

"Well, you see how a man may compromise himself

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when he does not know what he says," replied Athos, shrugging his shoulders as if he thought himself an object of pity. "I certainly never will get drunk again, D'Artagnan; it is too bad a habit."

D'Artagnan remained silent; and then changing the conversation all at once, Athos said, —

"By the bye, I thank you for the horse you have brought me."

"Is it to your mind?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes; but it is not a horse for hard work."

"You are mistaken; I have ridden him nearly ten leagues in less than an hour and a half, and he appeared no more distressed than if he had only made the tour of the Place St. Sulpice."

"Ah, you begin to awaken my regret."

"Regret?"

"Yes; I have parted with him."

"How?"

"Why, here is the simple fact. This morning I awoke at six o'clock. You were still fast asleep, and I did not know what to do with myself; I was still stupid from our yesterday's debauch. As I came into the public room, I saw one of our Englishmen bargaining with a dealer for a horse, his own having died yesterday from bleeding. I drew near, and found he was bidding a hundred pistoles for a fine chestnut nag. '*Pardieu*,' said I, 'my good gentleman, I have a horse to sell, too.' 'Ay, and a very fine one! I saw him yesterday; your friend's lackey was leading him.' 'Do you think he is worth a hundred pistoles?' 'Yes! Will you sell him to me for that sum?' 'No; but I will play for him.' 'What?' 'At dice.' No sooner said than done, and I lost the horse. Ah, ah! but please to observe I won back the equipage," cried Athos.

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D'Artagnan looked much disconcerted.

"This vexes you?" said Athos.

"Well, I must confess it does," replied D'Artagnan. "That horse was to have identified us in the day of battle. It was a pledge, a remembrance. Athos, you have done wrong."

"But my dear friend, put yourself in my place," replied the musketeer. "I was hipped to death; and still further, upon my honor, I don't like English horses. If it is only to be recognized, why the saddle will suffice for that; it is quite remarkable enough. As to the horse, we can easily find some excuse for its disappearance. What the devil! a horse is mortal; suppose mine had had the glanders, or the farcy?"

D'Artagnan did not smile.

"It vexes me greatly," continued Athos, "that you attach so much importance to these animals, for I am not yet at the end of my story."

"What else have you done?"

"After having lost my own horse, nine against ten, — see how near, — I formed an idea of staking yours."

"Yes; but you stopped at the idea, I hope?"

"No; for I put it in execution that very minute."

"And the consequence?" said D'Artagnan, in great anxiety.

"I threw, and I lost."

"What, my horse?"

"Your horse, seven against eight; a point short — you know the proverb."

"Athos, you are not in your right senses, I swear."

"My dear lad, that was yesterday, when I was telling you silly stories, it was proper to tell me that, and not this morning. I lost him then, with all his appointments and furniture."

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"Really, this is frightful."

"Stop a minute; you don't know all yet. I should make an excellent gambler if I were not too hot-headed; but I was hot-headed, just as if I had been drinking. Well, I was hot-headed then —"

"Well, but what else could you play for. You had nothing left?"

"Oh, yes, my friend; there was still that diamond left which sparkles on your finger, and which I had observed yesterday."

"This diamond!" said D'Artagnan, placing his hand eagerly on his ring.

"And as I am a connoisseur in such things, having had a few of my own once, I estimated it at a thousand pistoles."

"I hope," said D'Artagnan, half dead with fright, "you made no mention of my diamond?"

"On the contrary, my dear friend, this diamond became our only resource; with it I might regain our horses and their harnesses, and even money to pay our expenses on the road."

"Athos, you make me tremble!" cried D'Artagnan.

"I mentioned your diamond then to my adversary, who had likewise remarked it. What the devil, my dear, do you think you can wear a star from heaven on your finger, and nobody observe it? Impossible!"

"Go on, go on, my dear fellow!" said D'Artagnan; "for upon my honor, you will kill me with your indifference."

"We divided, then, this diamond into ten parts of a hundred pistoles each."

"You are laughing at me, and want to try me!" said D'Artagnan, whom anger began to take by the hair, as Minerva takes Achilles, in the Iliad.

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"No, I do not jest, *mordieu!* I should like to have seen you in my place! I had been fifteen days without seeing a human face, and had been left to brutalize myself in the company of bottles."

"That was no reason for staking my diamond!" replied D'Artagnan, closing his hand with a nervous spasm.

"Hear the end. Ten parts of a hundred pistoles each, in ten throws, without revenge; in thirteen throws I had lost all, — in thirteen throws. The number thirteen was always fatal to me; it was on the 13th of the month of July that —"

"*Ventrebleu!*" cried D'Artagnan, rising from the table, the history of the present day making him forget that of the preceding one.

"Patience!" said Athos; "I had a plan. The Englishman was an original; I had seen him conversing that morning with Grimaud, and Grimaud had told me that he had made him proposals to enter into his service. I staked Grimaud, the silent Grimaud, divided into ten portions."

"Well, what next?" said D'Artagnan, laughing in spite of himself.

"Grimaud himself, understand; and with the ten parts of Grimaud, which are not worth a ducatoon, I regained the diamond. Tell me, now, if persistence is not a virtue?"

"My faith! but this is droll," cried D'Artagnan, consoled, and holding his sides with laughter.

"You may guess, finding the luck turned, that I again staked the diamond."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, becoming angry again.

"I won back your harness, then your horse, then my harness, then my horse, and then I lost again. In brief, I regained your harness and then mine. That's

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where we are. That was a superb throw, so I left off there."

D'Artagnan breathed as if the whole hostelry had been removed from his breast.

"Then the diamond is safe?" said he, timidly.

"Intact, my dear friend; besides the harness of your Bucephalus and mine."

"But what is the use of harnesses without horses?"

"I have an idea about them."

"Athos, you make me shudder."

"Listen to me. You have not played for a long time, D'Artagnan."

"And I have no inclination to play."

"Swear to nothing. You have not played for a long time, I said; you ought, then, to have a good hand."

"Well, what then?"

"Well; the Englishman and his companion are still here. I remarked that he regretted the horse-furniture very much. You appear to think much of your horse. In your place I would stake the furniture against the horse."

"But he will not wish for only one harness."

"Stake both, *pardieu!* I am not selfish, as you are."

"You would do so?" said D'Artagnan, undecided, so strongly did the confidence of Athos begin to prevail, in spite of himself.

"On my honor, in one single throw."

"But having lost the horses, I am particularly anxious to preserve the harnesses."

"Stake your diamond, then."

"This? That 's another matter. Never, never!"

"The devil!" said Athos. "I would propose to you to stake Planchet, but as that has already been done, the Englishmen would not, perhaps, be willing."

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"Decidedly, my dear Athos," said D'Artagnan, "I should like better not to risk anything."

"That 's a pity," said Athos, coolly. "The Englishman is overflowing with pistoles. Good Lord, try one throw! One throw is soon made!"

"And if I lose?"

"You will win."

"But if I lose?"

"Well, you will surrender the harnesses."

"Have with you for one throw!" said D'Artagnan.

Athos went in quest of the Englishman, whom he found in the stable, examining the harnesses with a greedy eye. The opportunity was good. He proposed the conditions, — the two harnesses, either against one horse or a hundred pistoles. The Englishman calculated fast; the two harnesses were worth three hundred pistoles. He consented.

D'Artagnan threw the dice with a trembling hand, and turned up the number three; his paleness terrified Athos, who, however, contented himself with saying, "That 's a sad throw, comrade; you will have the horses fully equipped, Monsieur."

The Englishman, quite triumphant, did not even give himself the trouble to shake the dice. He threw them on the table without looking at them, so sure was he of victory; D'Artagnan turned aside to conceal his ill humor.

"Hold, hold, hold!" said Athos, with his quiet tone; "that throw of the dice is extraordinary. I have not seen such a one four times in my life. Two aces!"

The Englishman looked, and was seized with astonishment. D'Artagnan looked, and was seized with pleasure.

"Yes," continued Athos, "four times only: once at the house of M. Créquy; another time at my own house in the

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country, in my château at ——, when I had a château; a third time at M. de Tréville's, where it surprised us all; and the fourth time at a cabaret, where it fell to my lot, and where I lost a hundred louis and a supper on it."

"Then Monsieur takes his horse back again," said the Englishman.

"Certainly," said D'Artagnan.

"Then there is no revenge?"

"Our conditions said, 'No revenge,' you will please to recollect."

"That is true; the horse shall be restored to your lackey, Monsieur."

"A moment," said Athos; "with your permission, Monsieur, I wish to speak a word with my friend."

"Say on."

Athos drew D'Artagnan aside.

"Well, Tempter, what more do you want with me?" said D'Artagnan. "You want me to throw again, do you not?"

"No, I would wish you to reflect."

"On what?"

"You mean to take your horse?"

"Without doubt."

"You are wrong, then. I would take the hundred pistoles. You know you have staked the harnesses against the horse or a hundred pistoles, at your choice."

"Yes."

"Well, then, I would take the hundred pistoles."

"And I take the horse."

"In which, I repeat, you are wrong. What is the use of one horse for us two? I could not ride behind. We should look like the two sons of Aymon, who had lost their brother. You cannot think of humiliating me by prancing along by my side on that magnificent charger.

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For my part, I should not hesitate a moment; I should take the hundred pistoles. We want money for our return to Paris."

"I am much attached to that horse, Athos."

"And there again you are wrong. A horse slips and injures a joint; a horse stumbles and breaks his knees to the bone; a horse eats out of a manger in which a glandered horse has eaten. There is a horse, or rather a hundred pistoles, lost. A master must feed his horse, while on the contrary, the hundred pistoles feed their master."

"But how shall we get back?"

"Upon our lackeys' horses, *pardieu.* Anybody may see by our bearing that we are people of condition."

"Pretty figures we shall cut on ponies while Aramis and Porthos caracole on their steeds."

"Aramis! Porthos!" cried Athos, and laughed aloud.

"What is it?" asked D'Artagnan, who did not at all comprehend the hilarity of his friend.

"Nothing, nothing! Go on!"

"Your advice, then?"

"To take the hundred pistoles, D'Artagnan. With the hundred pistoles we can live well to the end of the month. We have undergone a great deal of fatigue, remember, and a little rest will do no harm."

"I rest? Oh, no, Athos. Once in Paris, I shall prosecute my search for that unfortunate woman!"

"Well, you may be assured that your horse will not be half so serviceable to you for that purpose as good golden louis. Take the hundred pistoles, my friend; take the hundred pistoles!"

D'Artagnan only required one reason, to be satisfied. This last reason appeared convincing. Besides, he feared that by resisting longer he should appear selfish in the eyes of Athos. He acquiesced, therefore, and chose the

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hundred pistoles, which the Englishman paid down on the spot.

They then determined to depart. Peace with the landlord, in addition to Athos's old horse, cost six pistoles. D'Artagnan and Athos took the nags of Planchet and Grimaud, and the two lackeys started on foot, carrying the saddles on their heads.

However ill our two friends were mounted, they were soon far in advance of their servants, and arrived at Crèvecœur. From a distance they perceived Aramis, seated in a melancholy manner at his window, looking out, like Sister Anne, at the dust in the horizon.

"*Holà*, Aramis! what the devil are you doing there?" cried the two friends.

"Ah, is that you, D'Artagnan, and you, Athos?" said the young man. "I was reflecting upon the rapidity with which the blessings of this world leave us. My English horse, which has just disappeared amid a cloud of dust, has furnished me with a living image of the fragility of the things of the earth. Life itself may be resolved into three words: *Erit, est, fuit.*"

"Which means —" said D'Artagnan, who began to suspect the truth.

"Which means that I have just been duped, — sixty louis for a horse which by the manner of his gait can do at least five leagues an hour."

D'Artagnan and Athos laughed aloud.

"My dear D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "don't be too angry with me, I beg. Necessity has no law; besides, I am the person punished, as that rascally horse-dealer has robbed me of fifty louis, at least. Ah, you fellows are good managers! You ride on your lackeys' horses, and have your own gallant steeds led along carefully by hand, at short stages"

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At the same instant a market-cart, which some minutes before had appeared upon the Amiens road, pulled up at the inn, and Planchet and Grimaud came out of it with the saddles on their heads. The carter was returning empty to Paris, and the two lackeys had agreed, for their transport, to slake the wagoner's thirst along the route.

"What is this?" said Aramis, on seeing them arrive. "Nothing but saddles?"

"Now do you understand?" said Athos.

"My friends, that's exactly like me! I retained my harness by instinct. *Holà*, Bazin! bring my new saddle and carry it along with those of these gentlemen."

"And what have you done with your ecclesiastics?" asked D'Artagnan.

"My dear fellow, I invited them to a dinner the next day," replied Aramis. "They have some capital wine here, — please to observe that in passing. I did my best to make them drunk. Then the curate forbade me to quit my uniform, and the Jesuit entreated me to get him made a musketeer."

"Without a thesis?" cried D'Artagnan, — "without a thesis? I demand the suppression of the thesis."

"Since then," continued Aramis, "I have lived very agreeably. I have begun a poem in verses of one syllable. That is rather difficult, but the merit in all things consists in the difficulty. The matter is gallant. I will read you the first canto. It has four hundred lines, and lasts a minute."

"My faith, my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan, who detested verses almost as much as he did Latin, "add to the merit of the difficulty that of the brevity, and you are sure that your poem will at least have two merits."

"You will see," continued Aramis, "that it breathes

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irreproachable passion. And so, my friends, we return to Paris? Bravo! I am ready. We are going to rejoin that good fellow, Porthos. So much the better. You can't think how I have missed him, the great simpleton. To see him so self-satisfied reconciles me with myself. He would not sell his horse; not for a kingdom! I think I can see him now, mounted upon his superb animal and seated in his handsome saddle. I am sure he will look like the Great Mogul!"

They made a halt for an hour to refresh their horses. Aramis discharged his bill, placed Bazin in the cart with his comrades, and they set forward to join Porthos.

They found him up, less pale than when D'Artagnan left him after his first visit, and seated at a table on which, though he was alone, was spread enough for four persons. This dinner consisted of meats nicely dressed, choice wines, and superb fruit.

"Ah, *pardieu!*" said he, rising, "you come in the nick of time, gentlemen. I was just beginning the soup, and you will dine with me."

"Oh, oh!" said D'Artagnan, "Mousqueton has not caught these bottles with his lasso. Besides, here is a piquant *fricandeau* and a fillet of beef."

"I am recruiting myself," said Porthos, — "I am recruiting myself. Nothing weakens a man more than these devilish strains. Did you ever suffer from a strain, Athos?"

"Never! though I remember, in our affair of the Rue Férou, I received a sword-wound which at the end of fifteen or eighteen days produced exactly the same effect."

"But this dinner was not intended for you alone, Porthos?" said Aramis.

"No," said Porthos, "I expected some gentlemen of the neighborhood, who have just sent me word they could

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not come. You will take their places and I shall not lose by the exchange. *Holà*, Mousqueton, seats, and order double the bottles!"

"Do you know what we are eating here?" said Athos, at the end of ten minutes.

"*Pardieu!*" replied D'Artagnan, "for my part I am eating veal garnished with shrimps and vegetables."

"And I some lamb-chops," said Porthos.

"And I a plain chicken," said Aramis.

"You are all mistaken, gentlemen," answered Athos, gravely; "you are eating horse."

"Eating what?" said D'Artagnan.

"Horse!" said Aramis, with a grimace of disgust.

Porthos alone made no reply.

"Yes, horse. Are we not eating a horse, Porthos? and perhaps his saddle, therewith."

"No, gentlemen, I have kept the harness," said Porthos.

"My faith," said Aramis, "we are all alike. One would think we had tipped the wink."

"What could I do?" said Porthos. "This horse made my visitors ashamed of theirs, and I don't like to humiliate people."

"Then your duchess is still at the waters?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Still," replied Porthos. "And, my faith, the governor of the province — one of the gentlemen I expected to-day — seemed to have such a wish for him, that I gave him to him."

"Gave him?" cried D'Artagnan.

"My God, yes, *gave*, that is the word," said Porthos; "for the animal was worth at least a hundred and fifty louis, and the stingy fellow would only give me eighty."

"Without the saddle?" said Aramis.

"Yes, without the saddle."

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"You will observe, gentlemen," said Athos, "that Porthos has made the best bargain of any of us."

And then commenced a roar of laughter in which they all joined, to the astonishment of poor Porthos; but when he was informed of the cause of their hilarity, he shared it vociferously, according to his custom.

"There is one comfort, we are all in cash," said D'Artagnan.

"Well, for my part," said Athos, "I found Aramis's Spanish wine so good that I sent on a hamper of sixty bottles of it in the wagon with the lackeys. That has weakened my purse."

"And I," said Aramis, "imagined that I had given almost my last sou to the church of Montdidier and the Jesuits of Amiens, with whom I had made engagements which I ought to have kept. I have ordered masses for myself, and for you, gentlemen, which will be said, gentlemen, for which I have not the least doubt you will be marvellously benefited."

"And I," said Porthos, "do you think my strain cost me nothing?—without reckoning Mousqueton's wound, for which I had to have the surgeon twice a day, and who charged me double on account of that foolish Mousqueton having allowed himself a ball in a part which people generally only show to an apothecary; so I advised him to try never to get wounded there any more."

"Ay, ay!" said Athos, exchanging a smile with D'Artagnan and Aramis, "it is very clear you acted nobly with regard to the poor lad; that is like a good master."

"In short," said Porthos, "when all my expenses are paid, I shall have, at most, thirty crowns left."

"And I about ten pistoles," said Aramis.

"Well, then, it appears that we are the Crœsuses of the

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society. How much have you left of your hundred pistoles, D'Artagnan?"

"Of my hundred pistoles? Why, in the first place, I gave you fifty."

"You think so?"

"*Pardieu!*"

"Ah, that is true. I recollect."

"Then I paid the host six."

"What a brute of a host! Why did you give him six pistoles?"

"You told me to give them to him."

"It is true; I am too good-natured. In brief, how much remains?"

"Twenty-five pistoles," said D'Artagnan.

"And I," said Athos, taking some small change from his pocket, "I —"

"You? Nothing!"

"My faith! so little that is it not worth reckoning with the general stock."

"Now, then, let us calculate how much we possess in all."

"Porthos?"

"Thirty crowns."

"Aramis?"

"Ten pistoles."

"And you, D'Artagnan?"

"Twenty-five."

"That makes in all?" said Athos.

"Four hundred and seventy-five livres," said D'Artagnan, who reckoned like Archimedes.

"On our arrival in Paris, we shall still have four hundred, besides the harnesses," said Porthos.

"But our troop horses?" said Aramis.

"Well, of the four horses of our lackeys we will make

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two for the masters, for which we will draw lots. With the four hundred livres we will make the half of one for one of the unmounted, and then we will give the turnings out of our pockets to D'Artagnan, who has a steady hand, and will go and play in the first gaming-house we come to. There!"

"Let us dine, then," said Porthos; "it is getting cold."

The friends, at ease with regard to the future, did honor to the repast, the remains of which were abandoned to Mousqueton, Bazin, Planchet, and Grimaud.

On arriving in Paris, D'Artagnan found a letter from M. de Tréville, which informed him that, at his request, the king had promised that he should enter the company of the Musketeers.

As this was the height of D'Artagnan's worldly ambition, — apart, be it well understood, from his desire of finding Madame Bonacieux, — he ran, full of joy, to seek his comrades, whom he had left only half-an-hour before, but whom he found very sad and deeply preoccupied. They were assembled in council at the residence of Athos, which always indicated an event of some gravity. M. de Tréville had intimated to them his Majesty's fixed intention to open the campaign on the 1st of May, and they must immediately prepare their outfits.

The four philosophers looked at one another in a state of bewilderment. M. de Tréville never jested in matters relating to discipline.

"And what do you reckon your outfit will cost?" said D'Artagnan.

"Oh, we can scarcely say. We have made our calculations with Spartan economy, and we each require fifteen hundred livres."

"Four times fifteen make sixty, — six thousand livres," said Athos.

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"It seems to me," said D'Artagnan, "with a thousand livres each, — I do not speak as a Spartan, but as a procurator, — "

This word *procurator* roused Porthos. "Stop," said he, "I have an idea."

"Well, that 's something, for I have not the shadow of one," said Athos, coolly; "but as to D'Artagnan, gentlemen, the idea of belonging to *ours* has driven him out of his senses. A thousand livres! for my part, I declare I want two thousand."

"Four times two make eight," then said Aramis; "it is eight thousand that we want to complete our outfits, towards which, it is true, we have already the saddles."

"Besides," said Athos, waiting till D'Artagnan, who went to thank M. de Tréville, had shut the door, — "besides, there is that beautiful ring which beams from the finger of our friend. What the devil! D'Artagnan is too good a comrade to leave his brothers in embarrassment while he wears the ransom of a king on his finger."

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CHAPTER XXIX.

HUNTING FOR THEIR EQUIPMENTS.

The most preoccupied of the four friends was certainly D'Artagnan, although he, in his quality of Guardsman, would be much more easily equipped than Messieurs the Musketeers, who were all of high rank; but our Gascon cadet was, as may have been observed, of a provident and almost avaricious character, and with that (explain the contradiction) so vain as almost to rival Porthos. To this preoccupation of his vanity, D'Artagnan at this moment joined an uneasiness much less selfish. Notwithstanding all his inquiries respecting Madame Bonacieux, he could obtain no intelligence of her. M. de Tréville had spoken of her to the queen. The queen was ignorant where the mercer's young wife was, but had promised to have her sought for; but this promise was very vague, and did not at all re-assure D'Artagnan.

Athos did not leave his chamber; he made up his mind not to take a single step to equip himself.

"We have still fifteen days before us," said he to his friends. "Well, if at the end of a fortnight I have found nothing, or rather if nothing has come to find me, as I am too good a Catholic to kill myself with a pistol-bullet, I will seek a good quarrel with four of his Eminence's Guards or with eight Englishmen, and I will fight until one of them has killed me, which, considering the number, cannot fail to happen. It will then be said of me that I

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died for the king; so that I shall have performed my duty without the expense of an outfit."

Porthos continued to walk about with his hands behind him, tossing his head and repeating, "I shall follow up my idea."

Aramis, anxious, and negligently dressed, said nothing.

It may be seen by these disastrous details that desolation reigned in the community.

The lackeys on their part, like the coursers of Hippolytus, shared the sadness of their masters. Mousqueton collected a store of crusts; Bazin, who had always been inclined to devotion, never quitted the churches; Planchet watched the flight of flies; and Grimaud, whom the general distress could not induce to break the silence imposed by his master, heaved sighs enough to soften the stones.

The three friends — for, as we have said, Athos had sworn not to stir a foot to equip himself — the three friends went out early in the morning, and returned late at night. They wandered about the streets, looking at the pavement as if to see whether the passengers had not left a purse behind them. They might have been supposed to be following tracks, so observant were they wherever they went. When they met they looked desolately at one another, as much as to say, "Have you found anything?"

However, as Porthos had first found an idea, and had thought of it earnestly afterwards, he was the first to act. He was a man of execution, this worthy Porthos. D'Artagnan perceived him one day walking towards the church of St. Leu, and followed him instinctively. He entered, after having twisted his mustache and elongated his imperial, which always announced on his part the most triumphant resolutions. As D'Artagnan took some precautions to conceal himself, Porthos believed he had not

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been seen. D'Artagnan entered behind him. Porthos went and leaned against the side of a pillar. D'Artagnan, still unperceived, supported himself against the other side.

There happened to be a sermon, which made the church very full of people. Porthos took advantage of this circumstance to ogle the women. Thanks to the cares of Mousqueton, the exterior was far from announcing the distress of the interior. His hat was a little napless, his feather was a little faded, his gold lace was a little tarnished, his laces were a trifle frayed; but in the obscurity of the church these things were not seen, and Porthos was still the handsome Porthos.

D'Artagnan observed, on the bench nearest to the pillar against which Porthos leaned, a sort of ripe beauty, rather yellow and rather dry, but erect and haughty under her black hood. The eyes of Porthos were furtively cast upon this lady, and then roved about at large over the nave.

On her side the lady, who from time to time blushed, darted with the rapidity of lightning a glance towards the inconstant Porthos; and then immediately the eyes of Porthos wandered anxiously. It was plain that this mode of proceeding piqued the lady in the black hood, for she bit her lips till they bled, scratched the end of her nose, and could not sit still in her seat.

Porthos, seeing this, re-twisted his mustache, elongated his imperial a second time, and began to make signals to a beautiful lady who was near the choir, and who not only was a beautiful lady, but still further, no doubt, a great lady, — for she had behind her a negro boy who had brought the cushion on which she knelt, and a female servant who held the emblazoned bag in which was placed the book from which she read the Mass.

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The lady with the black hood followed through all their wanderings the looks of Porthos, and perceived that they rested upon the lady with the velvet cushion, the little negro, and the maid-servant.

During this time Porthos played close. It was almost imperceptible motions of his eyes, fingers placed upon the lips, little assassinating smiles, which really did assassinate the disdained beauty.

Then she cried, "Ahem!" under cover of the *mea culpa*, striking her breast so vigorously that everybody, even the lady with the red cushion, turned round towards her. Porthos paid no attention. Nevertheless, he understood it all, but was deaf.

The lady with the red cushion produced a great effect — for she was very handsome — upon the lady with the black hood, who saw in her a rival really to be dreaded; a great effect upon Porthos, who thought her much prettier than the lady with the black hood; a great effect upon D'Artagnan, who recognized in her the lady of Meung, of Calais, and of Dover, whom his persecutor, the man with the scar, had saluted by the name of Milady.

D'Artagnan, without losing sight of the lady of the red cushion, continued to watch the proceedings of Porthos, which amused him greatly. He guessed that the lady of the black hood was the procurator's wife of the Rue aux Ours, which was the more probable from the church of St. Leu being not far from that locality.

He guessed, likewise, by induction, that Porthos was taking his revenge for the defeat of Chantilly, when the procurator's wife had proved so refractory with respect to her purse.

Amid all this, D'Artagnan remarked also that not one countenance responded to the gallantries of Porthos. There were only chimeras and illusions; but for real love,

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for true jealousy, is there any reality except illusions and chimeras?

The sermon over, the procurator's wife advanced towards the holy font. Porthos went before her, and instead of a finger, dipped his whole hand in. The procurator's wife smiled, thinking that it was for her Porthos put himself to this trouble; but she was cruelly and promptly undeceived. When she was only about three steps from him, he turned his head round, fixing his eyes steadfastly upon the lady with the red cushion, who had risen and was approaching, followed by her black boy and her woman.

When the lady of the red cushion came close to Porthos, Porthos drew his dripping hand from the font. The fair worshipper touched the great hand of Porthos with her delicate fingers, smiled, made the sign of the cross, and left the church.

This was too much for the procurator's wife; she doubted not there was an intrigue between this lady and Porthos. If she had been a great lady she would have fainted; but as she was only a procurator's wife, she contented herself with saying to the musketeer with concentrated fury, "Eh, M. Porthos, you don't offer *me* any holy water?"

Porthos, at the sound of that voice, started like a man awakened from a sleep of a hundred years.

"Ma — Madame!" cried he; "is that you? How is your husband, our dear M. Coquenard? Is he still as stingy as ever? Where can my eyes have been not to have even seen you during the two hours of the sermon?"

"I was within two paces of you, Monsieur," replied the procurator's wife; "but you did not perceive me because you had no eyes but for the pretty lady to whom you just now gave the holy water."

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Porthos pretended to be confused. "Ah," said he, "you have remarked —"

"I must have been blind not to have seen."

"Yes," said Porthos, "that is a duchess of my acquaintance whom I have great trouble to meet on account of the jealousy of her husband, and who sent me word that she should come to-day to this poor church, buried in this vile quarter, solely for the sake of seeing me."

"M. Porthos," said the procurator's wife, "will you have the kindness to offer me your arm for five minutes? I have something to say to you."

"Certainly, Madame," said Porthos, winking to himself, as a gambler does who laughs at the dupe he is about to pluck.

At that moment D'Artagnan passed in pursuit of Milady; he cast a passing glance at Porthos, and beheld this triumphant look.

"Eh, eh!" said he, reasoning to himself according to the strangely easy morality of that gallant period, "there is one who will be equipped in good time."

Porthos, yielding to the pressure of the arm of the procurator's wife, as a bark yields to the rudder, arrived at the cloister St. Magloire, — a little-frequented passage, enclosed with a turnstile at each end. In the daytime nobody was seen there but mendicants devouring their crusts, and children at play.

"Ah, M. Porthos," cried the procurator's wife, when she was assured that no one who was a stranger to the population of the locality could either see or hear her, — "ah, M. Porthos, you are a great conqueror, as it appears!"

"I, Madame?" said Porthos, drawing himself up proudly; "how so?"

"The signs just now, and the holy water! But that

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must be a princess, at least, — that lady with her negro boy and her maid!"

"My God! Madame, you are deceived," said Porthos; "she is simply a duchess."

"And that running footman who waited at the door, and that carriage with a coachman in grand livery who sat waiting on his seat?"

Porthos had seen neither the footman nor the carriage, but with the eye of a jealous woman, Madame Coquenard had seen everything.

Porthos regretted that he had not at once made the lady of the red cushion a princess.

"Ah, you are quite the pet of the ladies, M. Porthos!" resumed the procurator's wife, with a sigh.

"Well," responded Porthos, "you may imagine, with the physique with which nature has endowed me, I am not in want of good luck."

"Good Lord, how quickly men forget!" cried the procurator's wife, raising her eyes towards heaven.

"Less quickly than the women, it seems to me," replied Porthos; "for I, Madame, I may say I was your victim, when wounded, dying, I was abandoned by the surgeons. I, the offspring of a noble family, who placed reliance upon your friendship, — I was near dying of my wounds at first, and of hunger afterwards, in a beggarly inn at Chantilly, without your ever deigning once to reply to the burning letters I addressed to you."

"But, M. Porthos," murmured the procurator's wife, who began to feel that, to judge by the conduct of the great ladies of the time, she was wrong.

"I, who had sacrificed for you the Baronne de —"

"I know it well."

"The Comtesse de —"

"M. Porthos, do not overwhelm me!"

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"The Duchesse de —"

"M. Porthos, be generous!"

"You are right, Madame, and I will not finish."

"But it was my husband who would not hear of lending."

"Madame Coquenard," said Porthos, "remember the first letter you wrote me, and which I preserve engraven in my memory."

The procurator's wife uttered a groan.

"Besides," said she, "the sum you required me to borrow was rather large."

"Madame Coquenard, I gave you the preference. I had but to write to the Duchesse — but I won't repeat her name, for I am incapable of compromising a woman; but this I know, that I had but to write to her, and she would have sent me fifteen hundred."

The procurator's wife shed a tear.

"M. Porthos," said she, "I can assure you that you have severely punished me; and if in the time to come you should find yourself in a similar situation, you have but to apply to me."

"Fie, Madame, fie!" said Porthos, as if disgusted. "Let us not talk about money, if you please; it is humiliating."

"Then you no longer love me!" said the procurator's wife, slowly and sadly.

Porthos maintained a majestic silence.

"And that is the only reply you make? Alas! I understand."

"Think of the offence you have committed towards me, Madame! It remains *here!*" said Porthos, placing his hand on his heart, and pressing it strongly.

"I will repair it, indeed I will, my dear Porthos."

"Besides, what did I ask of you?" resumed Porthos, with a movement of the shoulders full of good fellow-

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ship. "A loan, nothing more! After all, I am not an unreasonable man. I know you are not rich, Madame Coquenard, and that your husband is obliged to bleed his poor clients to squeeze a few paltry crowns from them. Oh! if you were a duchess, a marchioness, or a countess, it would be quite a different thing; it would be unpardonable."

The procurator's wife was piqued.

"Please to know, M. Porthos," said she, "that my strong box, the strong box of a procurator's wife though it may be, is better filled than those of your affected minxes."

"That doubles the offence," said Porthos, disengaging his arm from that of the procurator's wife; "for if you are rich, Madame Cequenard, then there is no excuse for your refusal."

"When I said rich," replied the procurator's wife, who saw that she had gone too far, "you must not take the word literally. I am not precisely rich, though I am pretty well off."

"Hold, Madame," said Porthos, "let us say no more upon the subject, I beg of you. You have misunderstood me; all sympathy is extinct between us."

"Ingrate that you are!"

"Ah! I advise you to complain!" said Porthos.

"Begone then to your beautiful duchess; I will detain you no longer."

"And she is not to be despised, in my opinion."

"Now, M. Porthos, once more, and this is the last! Do you love me still?"

"Alas, Madame," said Porthos, in the most melancholy tone he could assume, "when we are about to enter upon a campaign, — a campaign in which my presentiments tell me I shall be killed —"

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"Oh, don't talk of such things!" cried the procurator's wife, bursting into tears.

"Something whispers me so," continued Porthos, becoming more and more melancholy.

"Rather say that you have a new love."

"Not so; I speak frankly to you. No new object affects me; and I even feel here, at the bottom of my heart, something which speaks for you. But in fifteen days, as you know, or as you do not know, this fatal campaign is to open. I shall be fearfully preoccupied with my outfit. Then I must make a journey to see my family, in the lower part of Brittany, to obtain the sum necessary for my departure."

Porthos observed a last struggle between love and avarice.

"And as," continued he, "the duchess whom you saw at the church has estates near to those of my family, we mean to make the journey together. Journeys, you know, appear much shorter when we travel two in company."

"Have you no friends in Paris, then, M. Porthos?" said the procurator's wife.

"I thought I had," said Porthos, resuming his melancholy air; "but I have been taught my mistake."

"You have some, M. Porthos, you have some!" cried the procurator's wife, in a transport that surprised even herself. "Come to our house to-morrow. You are the son of my aunt, consequently my cousin; you come from Noyon, in Picardy; you have several law-suits and no attorney. Can you recollect all that?"

"Perfectly, Madame."

"Come at dinner-time."

"Very well."

"And be upon your guard before my husband, who is rather shrewd, notwithstanding his seventy-six years."

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"Seventy-six years! *Peste!* that 's a fine age!" replied Porthos.

"A great age, you mean, M. Porthos. Yes, the poor man may be expected to leave me a widow, any hour," continued she, throwing a significant glance at Porthos. "Fortunately, by our marriage contract, the survivor takes everything."

"All?"

"Yes, all."

"You are a woman of precaution, I see, my dear Madame Coquenard," said Porthos, squeezing the hand of the procurator's wife tenderly.

"We are then reconciled, dear M. Porthos?" said she, simpering.

"For life," replied Porthos, in the same manner.

"Till we meet again, then, dear traitor!"

"Till we meet again, my forgetful charmer!"

"To-morrow, my angel!"

"To-morrow, flame of my life!"

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CHAPTER XXX.

MILADY.

D'ARTAGNAN followed Milady, without being perceived by her. He saw her get into her carriage, and heard her order the coachman to drive to St. Germain.

It was useless to try to keep pace on foot with a carriage drawn by two powerful horses. D'Artagnan therefore returned to the Rue Férou.

In the Rue de Seine he met Planchet, who had stopped before the house of a pastry-cook, and was contemplating with ecstasy a cake of the most appetizing appearance.

He ordered him to go and saddle two horses in M. de Tréville's stables, — one for himself, D'Artagnan, and one for Planchet, — and bring them to Athos's place. Once for all, Tréville had placed his stable at D'Artagnan's service.

Planchet proceeded towards the Rue du Colombier, and D'Artagnan towards the Rue Férou. Athos was at home, emptying sadly a bottle of the famous Spanish wine he had brought back with him from his journey into Picardy. He made a sign for Grimaud to bring a glass for D'Artagnan, and Grimaud obeyed as usual.

D'Artagnan related to Athos all that had passed at the church between Porthos and the procurator's wife, and how their comrade was probably by that time in a fair way to be equipped.

"As for me," replied Athos to this recital, "I am quite at my ease; it will not be women that will defray the expense of my outfit."

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"Handsome, well-bred, noble lord as you are, my dear Athos, neither princesses nor queens would be secure from your amorous solicitations."

"How young this D'Artagnan is!" said Athos, shrugging his shoulders; and he made a sign to Grimaud to bring another bottle.

At that moment Planchet put his head modestly in at the half-open door, and told his master that the horses were ready.

"What horses?" asked Athos.

"Two horses that M. de Tréville lends me at my pleasure, and with which I am now going to take a ride to St. Germain."

"Well, and what are you going to do at St. Germain?" then demanded Athos.

Then D'Artagnan described the meeting which he had at the church, and how he had found that lady who, with the seigneur in the black cloak and with the scar near his temple, filled his mind constantly.

"That is to say, you are in love with this lady as you were with Madame Bonacieux," said Athos, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously, as if he pitied human weakness.

"I? not at all!" said D'Artagnan. "I am only curious to unravel the mystery to which she is attached. I do not know why, but I imagine that this woman, wholly unknown to me as she is, and wholly unknown to her as I am, has an influence over my life."

"Well, perhaps you are right," said Athos. "I do not know a woman that is worth the trouble of being sought for when she is once lost. Madame Bonacieux is lost; so much the worse for her if she is found."

"No, Athos, no, you are mistaken," said D'Artagnan; "I love my poor Constance more than ever, and if I knew the place in which she is, were it at the end of the

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world, I would go to free her from the hands of her enemies; but I am ignorant. All my researches have been useless. What is to be said? I must divert my attention!"

"Amuse yourself with Milady, my dear D'Artagnan; I wish you may with all my heart, if that will amuse you."

"Hear me, Athos," said D'Artagnan. "Instead of shutting yourself up here as if you were under arrest, get on horseback and come and take a ride with me to St. Germain."

"My dear fellow," said Athos, "I ride horses when I have any; when I have none, I go afoot."

"Well," said D'Artagnan, smiling at the misanthropy of Athos, which from any other person would have offended him, "I ride what I can get; I am not so proud as you. So *au revoir*, dear Athos."

"*Au revoir*," said the musketeer, making a sign to Grimaud to uncork the bottle he had just brought.

D'Artagnan and Planchet mounted, and took the road to St. Germain.

All along the road, what Athos had said respecting Madame Bonacieux recurred to the mind of the young man. Although D'Artagnan was not of a very sentimental character, the mercer's pretty wife had made a real impression upon his heart. As he said, he was ready to go to the end of the world to seek her; but the world, being round, has many ends, so that he did not know which way to turn. Meantime, he was going to try to find out Milady. Milady had spoken to the man in the black cloak; therefore she knew him. Now, in the opinion of D'Artagnan, it was certainly the man in the black cloak who had carried off Madame Bonacieux the second time, as he had carried her off the first. D'Artagnan then only

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half lied, which is lying but little, when he said that by going in search of Milady he at the same time went in search of Constance.

Thinking of all this, and from time to time giving a touch of the spur to his horse, D'Artagnan completed his short journey, and arrived at St. Germain. He had just passed by the pavilion in which ten years later Louis XIV. was born. He rode up a very quiet street, looking to the right and the left to see if he could catch any vestige of his beautiful Englishwoman, when from the ground-floor of a pretty house, which, according to the fashion of the time, had no window towards the street, he saw a face peep out with which he thought he was acquainted. This person walked along the terrace, which was ornamented with flowers. Planchet recognized him first.

"Eh, Monsieur!" said he, addressing D'Artagnan, "don't you remember that face which is blinking yonder?"

"No," said D'Artagnan, "and yet I am certain it is not the first time I have seen that visage."

"*Parbleu*, I believe it is not," said Planchet. "Why, it is poor Lubin, the lackey of the Comte de Wardes, — he whom you took such good care of a month ago at Calais, on the road to the governor's country-house!"

"So it is!" said D'Artagnan; "I know him now. Do you think he would recollect you?"

"My faith, Monsieur, he was in such trouble that I doubt if he can have retained a very clear recollection of me."

"Well, go and talk with the boy," said D'Artagnan, "and make out if you can from his conversation whether his master is dead."

Planchet dismounted and went straight up to Lubin, who did not at all remember him, and the two lackeys began to chat with the best understanding possible;

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while D'Artagnan turned the two horses into a lane, went round the house, and came back to watch the conference from behind a hedge of filberts.

At the end of an instant's observation he heard the noise of a vehicle, and saw Milady's carriage stop opposite to him. He could not be mistaken; Milady was in it. D'Artagnan leaned upon the neck of his horse, in order that he might see without being seen.

Milady put her charming blond head out at the window, and gave her orders to her maid.

The latter — a pretty girl of about twenty or twenty-two years, active and lively, the true *soubrette* of a great lady — jumped from the step upon which, according to the custom of the time, she was seated, and took her way towards the terrace upon which D'Artagnan had perceived Lubin.

D'Artagnan followed the *soubrette* with his eyes, and saw her go towards the terrace; but it happened that some one in the house called Lubin, so that Planchet remained alone, looking in all directions for the road where D'Artagnan had disappeared.

The maid approached Planchet, whom she took for Lubin, and holding out a little billet to him said, "For your master."

"For my master?" replied Planchet, astonished.

"Yes, and important. Take it quickly."

Thereupon she ran towards the carriage, which had turned round towards the way it came, jumped upon the step, and the carriage drove off.

Planchet turned and re-turned the billet. Then, accustomed to passive obedience, he jumped down from the terrace, ran towards the lane, and at the end of twenty paces met D'Artagnan, who, having seen all, was coming to him.

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"For you, Monsieur," said Planchet, presenting the billet to the young man.

"For me?" said D'Artagnan; "are you sure of that?"

"*Pardieu*, Monsieur, I can't be more sure. The *soubrette* said, 'For your master.' I have no other master but you; so — a pretty little lass, my faith, is that *soubrette!*"

D'Artagnan opened the letter, and read these words: —

"A person who takes more interest in you than she is willing to confess wishes to know on what day it will suit you to walk in the forest? To-morrow, at the Hôtel Field of the Cloth of Gold, a lackey in black and red will wait for your reply."

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "this is rather warm; it appears that Milady and I are anxious about the health of the same person. Well, Planchet, how is the good M. de Wardes? He is not dead, then?"

"No, Monsieur, he is as well as a man can be with four sword-wounds in his body; for you, without question, inflicted four upon the dear gentleman, and he is still very weak, having lost almost all his blood. As I said, Monsieur, Lubin did not know me, and told me our adventure from one end to the other."

"Well done, Planchet! you are the king of lackeys. Now jump on to your horse, and let us overtake the carriage."

This did not take long. At the end of five minutes they perceived the carriage drawn up by the roadside; a cavalier, richly dressed, was close to the door.

The conversation between Milady and the cavalier was so animated that D'Artagnan stopped on the other side of the carriage without any one but the pretty *soubrette* perceiving his presence.

The conversation took place in English, — a language

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which D'Artagnan could not understand; but by the accent the young man plainly saw that the beautiful Englishwoman was in a great rage. She terminated it by an action which left no doubt as to the nature of this conversation; this was a blow with her fan, applied with such force that the little feminine weapon flew into a thousand pieces.

The cavalier laughed aloud, which appeared to exasperate Milady still more.

D'Artagnan thought this was the moment to interfere. He approached the other door, and taking off his hat respectfully, said, "Madame, will you permit me to offer you my services? It appears to me that this cavalier has made you very angry. Speak one word, Madame, and I take upon myself to punish him for his want of courtesy."

At the first word Milady turned, looking at the young man with astonishment; and when he had finished, she said in very good French, "Monsieur, I should with great confidence place myself under your protection if the person with whom I quarrel were not my brother."

"Ah, excuse me, then," said D'Artagnan. "You must be aware that I was ignorant of that, Madame."

"What is that stupid fellow troubling himself about?" cried the cavalier whom Milady had designated as her brother, stooping down to the height of the coach window. "Why does not he go about his business?"

"Stupid fellow yourself!" said D'Artagnan, stooping in his turn on the neck of his horse, and answering on his side through the carriage window. "I do not go on because it pleases me to stop here."

The cavalier addressed some words in English to his sister.

"I speak to you in French," said D'Artagnan; "be

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kind enough, then, to reply to me in the same language. You are Madame's brother, I learn, — be it so; but fortunately, you are not mine."

It might be thought that Milady, timid as women are in general, would have interposed in this commencement of mutual provocations in order to prevent the quarrel from going too far; but on the contrary, she threw herself back in her carriage, and called out coolly to the coachman, "Go on — home!"

The pretty *soubrette* cast an anxious glance at D'Artagnan, whose good looks seemed to have made an impression upon her.

The carriage went on, and left the two men facing each other; no material obstacle separated them.

The cavalier made a movement as if to follow the carriage; but D'Artagnan, whose anger, already excited, was much increased by recognizing in him the Englishman of Amiens, who had won his horse and was very near winning his diamond of Athos, caught at his bridle and stopped him.

"Well, Monsieur," said he, "you appear to be more stupid than I am, for you forget there is a little quarrel to arrange between us two."

"Ah," said the Englishman, "is it you, my master? It seems you must always be playing some game or other."

"Yes; and that reminds me that I have a revenge to take. We will see, my dear Monsieur, if you can handle a sword as skilfully as you can a dice-box."

"You see plainly that I have no sword," said the Englishman. "Do you wish to play the braggart with an unarmed man?"

"I hope you have a sword at home; but at all events, I have two, and if you like, I will throw with you for one of them."

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"Needless," said the Englishman; "I am well furnished with such playthings."

"Very well, my worthy gentleman," replied D'Artagnan, "pick out the longest, and come and show it to me this evening."

"Where, if you please?"

"Behind the Luxembourg; that's a charming spot for such amusements as the one I propose to you."

"That will do; I will be there."

"Your hour?"

"Six o'clock."

"*À propos*, you have probably one or two friends?"

"I have three, who would be honored by joining in the sport with me."

"Three? Marvellous! That falls out oddly! Three is just my number!"

"Now, then, who are you?" asked the Englishman.

"I am M. d'Artagnan, a Gascon gentleman, serving in the king's Musketeers. And you?"

"I am Lord de Winter, Baron Sheffield."

"Well, then, I am your servant, Monsieur Baron," said D'Artagnan, "though you have names rather difficult to recollect." And touching his horse with the spur, he cantered back to Paris. As he was accustomed to do in all cases of any consequence, D'Artagnan went straight to the residence of Athos.

He found Athos reclining upon a large sofa, where he was waiting, as he said, for his outfit to come and find him. He related to Athos all that had passed, except the letter to M. de Wardes.

Athos was delighted to find he was going to fight an Englishman. We might say that was his dream.

They immediately sent their lackeys for Porthos and

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Aramis, and on their arrival made them acquainted with the situation.

Porthos drew his sword from the scabbard, and made passes at the wall, springing back from time to time, and making contortions like a dancer.

Aramis, who was constantly at work at his poem, shut himself up in Athos's closet, and begged not to be disturbed before the moment of drawing swords.

Athos, by signs, desired Grimaud to bring another bottle of wine.

D'Artagnan employed himself in arranging a little plan, of which we shall hereafter see the execution, and which promised him some agreeable adventure, as might be seen by the smiles which from time to time passed over his countenance, whose thoughtfulness they animated.

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